

The Beat Within

THE BEAT WITHIN • A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE • VOLUME 13.08



Another week, another Beat... another Ed. Note... We've been feeling kind of down lately, and so we wanted to avoid spilling the mood onto you, our writer/readers. But we think it's better to speak (or write) honestly and to expose our moods to the view of others, just as we ask you to write honestly and expose yourselves to the views of others. No question about it, writing makes you vulnerable, and vulnerability can feel very threatening, even scary. But feeling vulnerable and scary is exactly what The Beat is all about, so we must do what we ask you to do, to explain and try to understand what has put our recent mood into the toilet. So, here goes...

Sometimes, we all get so discouraged we want to give up. That's true not only of those of you struggling through incarceration; it's true of all of us. Last week was like that for us. Bad things were happening to someone we love, and we could see no way out for him, no way forward — and that made us feel like giving up, too. Those are the times when we fall back on our own From The Beat responses — words from us not just to you, but to ourselves as well. The response we're thinking of here is this: how we feel at any given moment in our lives represents only a snapshot in what is really a moving picture, and that what the picture looks like today will be very different from what it looks like tomorrow — or a month from tomorrow. And, that it's worth remembering that if we can only get through the depression of today, we won't feel this way tomorrow.

Our friend has suffered through many difficulties in his young life, as have you all. He grew up without a father, with a mother who often was more interested in her own life (and the men in it) than the lives of her sons. He committed crimes that carry heavy penalties, including juvenile hall and the California Youth Authority. Recently, he suffered one of the greatest traumas of all: his younger brother fell victim to the mean streets, as so many of your homies have done. His murder pushed our friend over an emotional cliff, and he fell hard. Resorting to old patterns (that can provide temporary relief, but only at the expense of long-term grief), our friend turned to drugs — mostly alcohol, one of the most damaging drugs around — to numb his pain, to get through another day without going insane.

Unfortunately, as is so often the case, while he was able to forget the reality of his loss, of his pain, while drunk and stoned, he also forgot his responsibilities to friends, to work, to family. As we often write (in From The Beat), everything we do — and everything we don't do — carries consequences. There is no life without consequences, even though all of us wish there were, from time to time. In this case, the consequences included losing his job, one that he loved, one that all who worked with him loved him for. Indeed, there are few, if any, we know who do the job better than he. And yet, those who employ him could not justify keeping him employed when he failed to produce, failed to live up to the reasons that make him so good at what he does.

So, where are we going with this? We're not really sure. We know our feelings for this dear friend, despite his disappointing fall, have not changed in any way at all — except to fear for his future. We still love him. We still know that he is far more than the sum of his screw-ups (and we hope that we, too, are judged by more than our bad deeds). We still believe that he is capable of most anything he sets his mind to, and more.

And yet, we are at a loss to "do something for him." And that is another of our regular From The Beat messages, which is that only you (only we) can make the choices that affect our futures. No one can do it for you and no one can do it for us. Some of us have more support than others — loving families, true friends, brains that work well, goals that we want to achieve — but none of this guarantees that any one of us will succeed. The terrible truth is that each of us must make choices every minute of every day, and in those choices lies our futures. In that sense, we all stand alone and naked in the world, and that scares us, not

just for our friend, but also for ourselves.

This is the great challenge that each of you, like each of us, faces. We can point the finger at so many external forces — our upbringing, our environments, the system — but in the end, we have to take responsibility for our own decisions because we have to live the consequences of those decisions. Our friend knows that he needs help, but doesn't want to give up the crutches that he's relied on for so long. (Addiction is a disease, whether to drugs, to sex, or to the excitement of crime and the streets. But even worse, addiction is a disease that leads us to seek a cure in the very things that we are addicted to, a downward spiral that can lead to nothing good, nothing positive.)

So, all we can do is hope. Our friend recognizes that he needs help, and so we hope that he will also recognize that the self-medications he's relied on for far too long are not really helping, and that he — like every adult and every child in the world — must, at times, reach out for the hand that reaches back. The stakes are so high in his life, in your lives, in our lives. The Beat Within is one of those hands that reaches out. All we can do is hope and pray that you reach back.

Last week, as our friend's world crashed around him and left us feeling as low as we've felt for a long while, the skies turned dark, the weather grew cold; the rains came pouring down. Today, the sun is shining and we are feeling its warmth.

Tomorrow is another day.

This week's topics that were addressed in our workshops and are featured in this issue are "Complainin'" - We know our fair share of complainers, from our peers in the hall, to the neighbor across the street, to family members, to those who can't find anything to be happy about — at times that may be us. In truth, we all complain. We complain about our lives, conditions — pain/illness, to somebody doing wrong to us or our community. This week we want to hear you respectfully complain. Tell us about something worth complaining about that needs to change, and then tell us how it can be better/cured. (Can you make this complaint with cursing?)

The second topic, "Rescue Me" - All of us have been in sticky predicaments, from a bad scene at home, to being put on the spot in school, to a life or death situation in the community, to being targeted in juvenile hall and, obviously, in the courtroom for the alleged crime you are in jail for. This week we want you to write about a time when things could have been much worse, but you were saved from the worst consequences because someone or something intervened for you. Create the picture on how you were saved, or saved someone from a bad scene.

The third topic, "Talk Is Dead..." - We know that when incarcerated it's real easy for talk to be dead — meaning don't talk. And most of the time when talk is dead, we have the incredible urge to talk anyways. Why is communication so important? When have their been times when you really had something intelligent to say, but couldn't because talk was dead? Or when have you wished talk was dead so you didn't have to hear what someone else was saying?

And try to think outside the box and recall times on the outside when your parents/teacher/boss didn't want you to talk... Did you have anything good to say then? If talk wasn't dead, but instead was alive, what would you say? How would you convince us that you really have something meaningful to say?

Last but not least, "Love Stories..." - This week, we want to hear your stories about love, but without all the sexual details. So tell us a memory of love. Roses are red, violets are blue, if you make it x-rated, The Beat won't publish you...

All right editorial note readers, we hope you enjoy this issue, probably our most challenging one yet, given we are understaffed, yet we bring you amazing heat from you mighty thoughtful contributors. This issue is for you writers, thanks for reading and believing. See you next week in issue 13.09!

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Facing The Real And Life

What's up Beat? I'm still locked up in the halls. My mind going crazy thinking and thinking about how I'm going to change my life. It's time to stop all the bull and the stupid things. Damn Beat, when you stuck in this hall, yo' mind go wild. I got hella stuff on my mind to think about. I'm not talking about doing wrong. I mean the good, the new life fo' me.

It's time to be a new man, go home to the one you love and show them you change. People run they mouth but don't act. When you doing wrong, people open and speak. But when you doing good, yo' friends tell you that you tripping.

And what you doing for kids out there? Tell them it's time to put down the guns and stop with the drugs. No more killing. Stop the black-on-black. To everyone out there, it's time stop coming to jail, juvenile, prison. Yo' life is not meant to be in a place like this.

I got a woman at home that I love and care about. She's my life, my world, everything that I'll die for and more. I stress 'cause she's on my mind 24/7. I'm not going to lie, I worry and worry if she's ok. But you know, I pray and have faith she is.

It's time fo' me to get out this place. For everyone, it's time to change yo' life and go back home to the one you love the most

-Lil' Jao, San Francisco

From The Beat: What a wonderful piece of writing this is, Lil' Jao. We all mature at different rates — and some of us never mature at all. So we love to read a piece that shows that growth of the writer, from child to adult. You are standing at the door to a new life, one with adult responsibilities and adult judgments to make. What you have written here tells us that, even though it won't be easy, you are ready to walk through that door. Do it! We're behind you all the way!

Complaining

What's up with it Beat and all those Beaters? How it been? Well, I hope all is well and everybody is in the best of health.

Well, today I am going to write about complaining. You see since I've been in this place, I've heard so much complaining it makes my ears hurt. I hear how people go through this and how the White Man is the cause of their problems. They swear that it's always someone else.

I've been hurt all my life. Violence is everywhere. These guys are disrespectful. He's not supposed to be slangin' on the blocks. All bullshhh. If you've been through so many things in your life and lots of years hurting, that's your lesson. Learn from it. Get out of the hole that you're in and do something right. Stop running from those lies.

I've been through a lot of stuff in my life from violence, drugs, jail — also sex. I drowned myself in alcohol and smoked all my problems away. But they were all still there. You've just got to tease your demons. Start taking care of those who are always there for you. Start being a man about your problems. There are men in prison who regret everything. There are those that deny — hold it inside until it drives them crazy. Or they are just too crazy to confess to what they've done, or too embarrassed.

Life can be so wonderful, if you make it that way. Trust me, you'll see once you get there. Be a man not a coward, don't blame people for your own actions. That's all I've got to say. Just writing about this makes me heated — until next time, Beat.

-Sexy Veto, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a lot of powerful advice. Our favorite line that you write has to be: "Life can be so wonderful, if you make it that way." It seems like you really believe in redemption and taking responsibility. Thank you for being a leader.

Spooked Out of My Mind

I remember when I was a little kid, about seven.

I was at my cousin's house, chilling with his older brother too. We was in the garage playing four square. Then the ball had went up the garage. It was one of them electrical garages.

My cousin had climbed up the garage (it was open), and then his little brother told me "I bet you won't press the button to make the garage go up."

So I pressed it.

Then I heard my cousin that was up the garage screaming. He fell down the floor from on top of the garage. I thought everything was ok. But then I seen my cousin's hand bleeding. His veins was squirting out blood. I could see his blood. I brought out bandages and put it on him, but it wouldn't work. So I called my mom, then my mom called the ambulance.

I heard my cousin was gonna die because he was losing hella blood. When I went back to my house, I was spooked out my mind. I wish I was somewhere else besides earth. I finally heard my cousin was gonna be alright.

When he came over my house, I gave him all my Pokemon cards. Then he told me everything is ok.

-Linh, Alameda

From The Beat: That must have been truly terrifying for both you and your cousin, and what a relief that it all turned out. Did you get in trouble with your family for it? Do you and your cousin still get along today, and do you ever talk about that moment?

Talk Is Dead

Talk is dead when on one's around
While a mother's face is upside down
Who would talk to a crazed young boy?
With the touch of death upon his hand?
Realize the heart of a teenage boy
Who'll be turned, like a baby toy
Guide me toward the heaven gates
When I lose all the hate
Now tell me when, when talk is dead
Who will realize this world is fake?

-Bruce, Alameda

From The Beat: You have a true gift of thought and word, Bruce. You understand the world you've been handed, and that is rare, in our experience. Do not let your past, however much you think it stains your soul and hands, to determine your future! Believe us when we say that the community we all live in is desperate for young people of vision and insight to lead us out of the hole we've all dug for ourselves. You have the qualities of that leadership. Can you live up to that potential?

What's It Mean to Be Locked Up?

What's it mean to be locked up?
It means your soul can't roam
Your heart can't love
Your feelings can't feel
And that don't just go for you that's locked up
But also for everybody that loves you
'Cause your heart sends a signal to everybody you love
That makes their heart hurt
'Cause they can't see you or hear you.
Their feelings turn cold 'cause their heart hurts
They love will not show
'Cause they heart can't feel its happiness
'Cause the person they love so much is locked up.

-James, Alameda

From The Beat: Your really touched on the true meaning of lockdown: It's not about the food or the county clothes; it's about the way everyone hurts from the isolation of being cut off from family. You don't do your time on your own, you do it with everyone who loves you and suffers because they want you back with them!

Talk Is Dead

Talk is dead, talk is cheap.

People who run they mouth let me know they weak.

Ninjas talking the block to make them look cool.

But when it comes down it, he the dumbest one at school.

How you the man on yo' block, but all you do is run yo' mouth?

And when the beef pop off, you the first one to say,

"I got go in the house."

They say actions speak louder then words.

You say, "Mom, I'm at school," when you really posted on the curb.

Why the big homie always sayin', "I sold this and don't smoke that?" When really he ain't sold nothing 'cause he the one smokin' crack. People be like, "I'm living for my block and I'm living to get paid."

But it's the one who go to school that's gone really have it made.

But like I said talk is dead, talk is cheap.

Talk shhh to the wrong person, I bet you don't make it to see next week.

-Frontline, San Francisco

From The Beat: We almost took out that last line because it comes very close to being a threat. But we truly admire all the rest of this tight flow. When we feel the weakest is when we run our mouths the strongest. When we feel guilty is when we point the finger at someone else. When we're at the bottom, we pretend we're at the top. We hope you believe what you've written about going to school. That's the key to your future, and especially for one as smart as you!

I Loved You So Much...

Watching and waiting,
these days just go by
everyday I wake up
and just wish I would die.

My body so numb,
my soul in so much pain,
there's nothing to gain
from living another day.

The days are so plain
the world has no view.

I can't even think
without remembering you.

Your face is so clear.

Your voice barely clear
as though you were whispering
in my ear.

I loved you so much
and loved you so long.
Now I fear that you have been
long gone.

Gone from my mind
and gone from my soul.

Gone to a place
where you will never
grow old.

You promised to stay,
but decided to leave.

Now I sit day by day
not wanting to breathe.

I loved you so much
and I loved you too long.

-Lil' Sapita, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Miss Sapita, your poetry has graced the pages of The Beat Within for months and during that time we've enjoyed the soul-searching that you've done. We wish you the best on your life journey and hope that you will keep writing and stay in touch. You have found power in your voice - use it wisely!

Strategy

The reason the world is messed up because they can't strategize. They got generals and all their shot-callers starting these wars that they don't know how to handle. You can't learn nothin' from books. All these rich white boys who have never had to survive or struggle for nothing cannot properly use violence. They don't know nothin' about it, they've never witnessed it. You don't know nothing about the unexpected. They think that because they got little diplomas that they're masters of war or something. They go into war completely unprepared and get shocked when they got whooped, especially in Iraq. They thought that they were going to fight a civilized military, but became overwhelmed by their guerrilla warfare. But guerrilla warfare is just an educated way of sayin' "street fightin'"—that's why they keep gettin' whooped, 'cause in the streets there aren't any flanks, fronts or none of that army bullshhh. It's the only unorganized organization. Everyone stands together for their one united cause, but everyone cares more about themselves than anything else—that's why you might see a couple of people pass, but at the end, we're still there.

That's why the US is baffled at why we're here. That's why Iraq is still fighting. The US doesn't know what they're doin'. If they put someone like me, someone with street credentials, survivors of these streets (into Iraq), we would win. Put me in there. I would've destroyed Iraq about five years ago, and Afghanistan, too, and I would've moved on to the next.

But I wouldn't do it, because the US is corrupt and don't wanna see someone of color succeed in the white man's land. That's why revolutionaries strike fear in the US's heart. (Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin, Saddam Hussein, Osama, and all of them.)

-Birdman, San Francisco

From The Beat: You may know a lot more about how to street fight than many of the young men and women who signed up to go as soldiers and Marines into Iraq and Afghanistan, but how do you feel about the righteousness of those wars, themselves? If you felt the US was not corrupt at heart, would you want to be a soldier for the United States? Do you feel that American revolutionaries, who are or were people of color, were right in trying to fight for their human rights in the US? Maybe Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., Caesar Chavez? How could you use and teach all the street knowledge you have gained, in positive ways?

Black And Complaining

My complaint isn't a complaint

it's an every day problem I'm facing

Why so many people in the world got to be racist

My complaint is why is it so hard for a black man

Everything we do, we say we hope,

but we never say we can

Wonder why we hustle too hard to get a job

Everybody else eating good,

but we living off corn on the cob, pretty much

Everywhere, even the ghetto we are the most hated

It seems like everyone in the good movie,

but we are x-rated

Best known for rapping, and sports

We became big time celebrities when we go to court

I love being black

but I'm complaining because it's too hard

The sad thing about it is no one can change it

Not even the Lord.

- Reggie, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: Always keep in mind, and this goes for any race. There is a saying, "If one act's like a thug they will be treated like a thug." You are wrong about making a change, you can make a change. Your actions alone can make a change. Worry less about everyone around you, and concentrate on yourself and your loved ones.

Silence Of The Beaters

Imagine, readers, an issue of The Beat without any pieces; it couldn't work. All of us who contribute our writing are the very pillars that hold up this organization. (Much respect to the staff, so please don't take this the wrong way!)

So, I would ask all of you to consider carefully what you write. As they say, "The pen is mightier than the sword," so now, bow that so many people will read what you write, now that your voice extends to the multitude, consider the power your words carry.

We have the power to entertain (something sorely needed), the power to spread wisdom, and the power to give hope. I have heard that the right words at the right time can even change lives. The Beat Within offers us a certain measure of power that we would not otherwise have. I ask you to seize it.

-Monk, Santa Clara

From The Beat: How could we take this "the wrong way"? Every word, every thought, every idea is so right on the money, that all we can do is wonder how you got where you are, and to recognize what power you already possess. You are more than pillars; you are the very foundation that The Beat is built on. We are indebted to all of in general, but to you in particular for being the teacher we wish all Beat writers could become.

Talk Is Dead

Talk is dead! Staff always wanna say talk dead because they might see us having fun or a little excited and they want to ruin that. Communication is so important in here because it's like, what else is there to do? Can't go to the store, mess with a girls, etc. so you chop it up with the homies. They wanna see you stressed out and miserable; basically, they wanna break you.

Me, I don't let them. Talk can be dead all it want, but in mind, it's still alive. Forget what they talking about. When "talk is dead" they wanna see you talk so they can tax you quick to ruin yo' day and have you complaining so they give you more. But it's all good, though. It's still alive to me, because when my words are dead, my mind is dead because my words come from my mind. And if my mind is dead then I'm dead, and that ain't until another 50 years. I'm out.

-Monyea, San Francisco

From The Beat: We love how you put these thoughts together, recognizing that words and thought move together, and that as long as you're alive, talk will never be dead. But why sell yourself short? 50 years? We hope you're around for at least 75 more!

My Love For My Mother

The love I have for my mom, it's to die for. The love I have for my mom, it's 'til eternity. The love for my mom, I want to show, not by telling her, because the way I'm going, I'm killing her. She tells me right from wrong and I listen, but don't show it. By telling her, it's just words; to show her, it's more.

I want her to visit me, but I know if she does, I will see her eyes getting watery, and I don't want to see that.

For all you people who don't get visits from your mom, it's not that she don't care or love you, it's because they're coming for you, but you're not leaving with her.

I love my mom. I will try to do anything to make her happy, by starting now.

-Lil' Sneaky, San Francisco

From The Beat: Bravo, Lil' Sneaky. To us, this sounds like a turning point, a step away from childhood into adulthood. By committing yourself to start now, you have shown that you understand the change you want comes from inside, and that putting it off is just another way of never making it happen. We hope you show this to your mom. Her eyes will get watery when she reads it, but they will be tears of happiness.

Love Story

I start showing my love in the morning to my lil' sister, who can't get up and ready for school in the morning — making her breakfast, packing her lunch, getting her dressed, and taking her to school. I got to make sure she don't look nappy when she go to school.

I will show my love to any fellow person that would show me the respect that I show them. Like my father, whom I love dearly, always says, "Do to others that you want done to you."

I feel like no matter how bad these streets are, I take the respect I have for my fellows and project it in any way I can to everybody I see, a bum, someone on the bus. I try to help out all these people as much as I can, mainly trying to make a person happy.

Showing a person love and respect will get you far. People could get you back with the love and respect that you showed them.

This is how I met the girl who loves me right now. I helped her out with some problems at home, and have been on each other ever since. I got a lot to say about this girl, but I'ma leave it as I love her and hope that she has the same love for me when I get out of here.

-Eric, San Francisco

From The Beat: If you live by your father's advice (called The Golden Rule — do to others as you want others to do to you), your life will be so much better. In fact, if we all lived by this rule, the world would be a much better place. What we can't understand is how you could trade this loving family for a place in juvenile hall. Whatever it was that led you here and away from your little sister, your dad, and everything else

Knowledge

Time! Time is all you have here in the hall so why not make it a good time. You could sit here and think and think and if you start thinking the way you should you'll realize something. That something is that each and every one of us is an intellectual. A smart one at that because we as criminals know a lot more than the average man/woman due to the circumstances we're been put in. So here goes.

Sometimes I think but don't say, for it is dead talk.

Life! Life is virtuous and has lots of offers. We as men do not understand that because we block it and never speak on it. There are exclusions such as the great Nelson Mandela and the great Martin Luther King Junior, also the great Julio Cesar Chavez. These men spoke what they thought.

I do not consider myself great, not at all. In fact, I consider myself just above nothing for we are seen as nothing but I know I am not a lot more but a little more than that.

We as human beings could solve the world's problems if we just get peace and tranquility to think. I myself have had many great thoughts and ideas in my four concrete walls and that I could only get here because of the silence and the tranquility here.

I believe that Toookie Williams reached what he reached which is tranquility with himself due to this, and therefore became the man he became before his untimely death, or should I say murder.

-Raul, Alameda

From The Beat: Nice words of knowledge. We're very impressed with your words of wisdom. You make an excellent point on trying to make people realize that we need to really stop and think. We need to stop and think before we do anything. We need to stop and think on what we want to do in life. We need peace and tranquility in our lives. We all have the wisdom to do great things but yet we get distracted by the littlest things in our lives. We all need to realize what's important. But you guys are the future of America. How can you get your peers to look at their lives a little differently?

Rescue Me

Some of you may have heard of the four-year-old San Jose boy who died at the wave pool at Great America. Well, this year I was working as a lifeguard there. (It's a great job, fun as shhh.) I start my shift at 2:00 p.m. on the week day, and go straight to the wave pool.

Now, when I came in, I talked to my supe, and she told me to take a lunch, then hit the wave pool. So I did. But when I came back, the scene was all messed up. There were EMTs, firefighters, cops everywhere. I found my supe and asked what I could do to help.

Later on, I found out what happened that day. I wish I was there. I know I could have done something to help that boy. Why I say that is because not even a week before I had saved an older woman! (I don't think she would have died, but you never know.) So I know I was capable of helping that kid.

It's funny when something like that is not happening, you think you could never do something like what the lifeguards told me that kid did, or like me with the woman. You don't think, you just do! You jump and help that person like you're trained.

I wish I could have helped that kid. But now it's put me one more step closer to where I want to be and what I want to do.

-Slow Cooker, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Even though you weren't there to try to save this poor kid, we are still inspired by your words. You have a clear head on your shoulders, and the desire to do good, which is all we can ask of ourselves or anyone. Now is the time to focus on saving yourself. Think of yourself as a kid treading water and needing a boost up and out. Jump in and save yourself... and then you can save so many other kids. Tell us what it is you want to do when you get out of here, and tell us your plan for doing it. We have great expectations for you!

*I know I could have
done something to
help that boy.*

My Grandmother Rescue Me

My grandmother rescued me this week. I feared that the judge would choose to believe my mother's word over mine about my ankle monitor situation.

My mother is angry about her and my father's divorce and she decides to take it out on me. I don't know why, because that situation affects me, but I can't control that situation. My mother's constant anger towards me only makes me bitter and build up rage inside of me that I sometimes unleash on people who have nothing to do with my anger.

In the end I'm going home on ankle monitor to my grandmother's house where the situation is more stable.

It isn't that I don't love my parents I just made the decision that I have a better chance to succeed there.

-Greg, Alameda

From The Beat: Well whatever it takes for you to succeed then we're 100% with you. We're sorry to hear about your problems at home. We know it's hard dealing with your anger, but don't keep it bottled up man, that's not healthy. Talk to someone, write it down, but don't keep it inside. We wish you the best on your new program. You sound very determined and don't let nobody stop you from succeeding.

My Dad

My dad, when he was fighting for Ho Chi Minh, was stationed in the countryside (in North Vietnam.) He's Chinese and he fought for the North Vietnamese in the Vietnam War, and his own people from Vietnam called him a "Chink." When he got sick, the NVA (North Vietnamese Army) sent him back to Hanoi (the capital of North Vietnam.) Then, two years went by and he got sent back to China when the Vietnamese were expelling Chinese from Vietnam, so he got deported to near Hong Kong. He moved to Montreal, Canada, and moved back to near Hong Kong.

He grew up in Hanoi, but his family got dispersed to Montreal, Canada, China, and some stayed in Viet Nam. When he got over to China, he was doing illegal stuff—selling ration cards, which you needed to buy clothes, shoes; and rice ration cards, which you needed to buy food. He had one friend he sold tickets to. My dad got rich off of selling those tickets. But the Chinese people in Hong Kong called him "Gook," because he didn't speak no Cantonese, he only spoke Vietnamese, but he learned the language, Cantonese, by teaching himself.

My dad lived with four people in a room in China. He told me one time the men he lived with gambled the whole day. One day my dad won. He wanted to go to sleep. While he was asleep, somebody jacked his money, so when he woke up, he was mad. The other guys who lived with him lied on him and said he didn't have no money.

My father got to the US because he got picked out of bunch of Asians because the guy who brought the Chinese to the US thought my dad was a big time gangsta, because he was kinda stocky and he looked like a big boss. In my language, he looked like a "die-low," which means "big boss."

He was struggling when he first came to this country. He has a necklace with his own zodiac, which is the sign of a boss. He started working for \$3 an hour, working at McDonald's and the DPW (Department of Public Works), cleaning up the city. He didn't speak no English. He had to learn. He started getting better jobs—he got a license to drive trucks and later on, he was a taxi driver, and then he drove eighteen-wheelers.

My dad told me that he was chasing a lot of girls. Later on he told me my mom was lucky to have him, but my mom told me they met through their buddies. They got married in '85 and had my sister, then they had me in '89 and my brother in '90.

When my sister started going "die ga-jai," which literally mans "big sister," but it also means, "lady boss." She chilled with kids and got hella respect, but she wasn't really in a gang.

I went out and I don't know if I have a name in the street. His name was Roger, Jr., who called me Kangaroo Jack from Tekken—a videogame made my Namco, who invented Pac Man.

My younger brother is funny. He's tall like me. He's good at the piano. He inspired me to play piano. I play up here (at Log Cabin Ranch) He's been in YGC (the Youth Guidance Center—juvy hall in San Francisco,) too. He's been in a gang but now he's out.

Now my dad's a Muni driver and he got cheddar, but he's a workaholic still.

-Kangaroo, San Francisco

From The Beat: Great story about your father. He's been through a lot in his life. Has he ever returned to Hanoi, now that the war is long over? Hong Kong? What has he tried to teach you? How does he feel about how you're living your life? Do your mom and dad, and brother and sister come down to the Ranch to visit? What dreams does your dad have for you? What do you want/plan for your own future?

Who Am I?

My name is James. I'm 15. I live in Morgan Hill and go to Sobrato High School. I enjoy writing, a lot! Every time I get an inspiration from someone, I feel inspired to write about it. I also liked talking on the phone with friends.

I've been in a lot of trouble in the past – grand theft, and grand theft auto.

Most people think I'm just a thief. I don't always steal. Yeah I may be a thief but I want to change. I really do want to get help for my stealing problems. But there are many more good qualities I have. I honestly think the good qualities outweigh the bad.

I believe in honesty, respect, strength, courage, forgiveness. I am honest with everybody except for my mom; all of the above qualities apply except for my mom. I don't know why. I really am a good person, and most people in my family believe I'm a bad person. But I know in my heart that I'm a good person and I want to succeed in life. I love my family very much; family means more to me than anything.

When I get older, I want to go to San Jose State (University) as an environmentalist. The earth means a lot to me. I wish people didn't take the Earth for granted. Many people litter, pollute the air, and pollute the water. People just don't respect the Earth, but what they don't realize is that the Earth is the only thing we have. I wish people respected the Earth.

I honestly know the difference between right and wrong. When I get put in a position where I have to do something wrong, my conscious always tells me not to do it but I act compulsively. I don't know why I do the things I do. But I do realize that I do have a problem and want help for the problems that I have. I just don't know how to get help for these problems.

I'm now in Juvenile Hall and I greatly regret the things I've done. I know I've done many bad things, and I just hope the courts and my family can forgive me for the things I've done. I honestly want to succeed in life and do good. I enjoy doing good and really feel good about myself when I make the right choices. I know that I can do anything I want as long as I set my mind to it.

When I get out of here I plan to get a job so I can pay my restitution that I owe (\$7,000). To do this I'm going to go to school so I can get my work permit. And when I go home I'm going to help my mom around the house as much as I can, and I'm going to be a better person. This experience has really showed me a lot about myself. And it's made me realize that I don't want to live the lifestyle I've been recently living. I am going to succeed in life and do the best of my ability to kick ass and live the best life I can live, while making the right choices for myself.

- James, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Happy to see that you have such confidence in your self, and that you are honest in sharing your shortcomings and struggles. Be patient, and eventually that inner confidence will shine through so that others will know who you truly are. That process will probably start with your mom. Share with her your struggles and successes, and she will be a source of strength to you. We can't do it alone in this tough world, but if we can find just a few family members and friends who will have our back, we'll go a long way.

... I have a lot of support and caring people around me, and I'm really happy I have those people in my life.



Caring People Rescued Me

The last time I got locked up, I thought I was screwed. I thought I was going to go out of home placement. I was very depressed and worried. I realized that I have a lot of support and caring people around me, and I'm really happy I have those people in my life.

Then come my court day. I thought I was just going to go to court and not get out. During my court, my mom said a lot of good things about me. My case managers said I was improving and other good things. Then my lawyer argued, and the judge gave me another chance.

The situation could've been much worse, but I got a lot of help and I appreciate it. I hope I get the help I got last time, and I hope I get another chance.

-Ramon, San Francisco

From The Beat: You are very lucky to have the support system that came to your rescue. But what did you do with that chance the judge gave you? If you have so many people in your corner, don't you think you owe them the respect of living up to their expectations? We believe you when you say you appreciate all the help you got, but the true measure of that appreciation is not to let those people – or yourself – down again.

Rescue Me

I grew up in San Jose and was born in Mountain View.

My father was a very angry man. My dad was also a very controlling man. I remember I used to get beat at home from him all the time for every little thing. I hated my dad so did my mom. Man!

My mom got hit all the time – sexually and emotionally abused. I protected my mom every time my dad put his hands on her – that's why I got hit all the time. I hated being at home.

During my teen years when I started high school that's what got me into drugs because it helped me heal my pain at the moment.

It went too far – it took me into smoking weed and drinking and then I ran away so many times I tried to stay away and hide out the best way I knew, so they couldn't find me. I even had suicide thoughts at times, but my mother always managed to find me. Seeing more and more violence and watching my sister die on Halloween – all my thoughts and anger to myself got me in this hell hole and now I'm looking for help in trying to rescue myself from my violent life.

-Angel, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow, this is such a painful story and we applaud your courage for sharing it. It seems that even though you have had such a hard time with your dad and your sister passing – that you are recognizing it and trying to turn your life around. If you believe you can rescue yourself, you will be able to change your life.

Nightmares

I'm having nightmares of all the shhh that I've seen
Yellow tapes surrounding bodies through out all of my dreams

Bloody walls closing in as I became paranoid
Everything is getting quiet, where the hell is the noise?
I feel the anger and frustration building up in my body
So I'm spitting out my life like shells spit out of a shottie

I need freedom in my life like the fishes need water
As I struggle to survive it seems like life getting harder
All these people laugh and smile like what we living is funny

While we hungry on the streets tryna get us some money
I was told I was stupid 'cause the point I was missing
Now I see why people say that I'm gonna end up in prison

But yet it's too late, my dreams are telling me something
It's time to get my shhh together
and quit doing the dumb thing

I do what I done so I'm gonna keep it in motion
I'm gonna try to stay alive 'cause living life's my devotion

-Gumby, Alameda

From The Beat: We're proud of you Gumby. We're starting to see you write down some positive things. You wanna live life. It's not that hard. Life itself is a challenge, but you just have to find the strength inside yourself to conquer all obstacles. We know you can do it. Just stay devoted!

That Place Called Home

This place people call home. Where is that? What is it like?

People tell me all the time, Home is where you make it. In that case, where is mine? I have no house to call mine, I have no family to call mine. I have nothing but a dream and a plan. My home would I guess have to be California. I have been to the North and the South. I have no place to call home. I hate when people ask me where I'm from, because I answer with the name of my block. But I've only lived there for three years of my life. Then I got shipped to San Diego, where I hated it.

My brother got jumped into a gang. And then I was in numerous homes after that. All I know is that I'm tired of moving. I'm tired of the same old shhh. It pisses me off when all my stuff is mobile. I'm so used to moving, I'll be ready before they tell me I'm moving! After the first two homes, you know not to get attached.

I would die to have a place I can call home

I guess that someday I'll find myself my own home.
Welcome to my home.

-Momo, Alameda

From The Beat: That must have been real stress, bouncing around from place to place, and without parents either. Who were the family members you ended up being the closest to, the ones you could depend on? Your brother? Aunties? Grandparents? And when you do make your own home, where will you want it to be? What is your favorite place that you've seen (or dreamed of) so far?

My Revelation

I prayed to God every night for one chance, then the gavel slammed... Three years in YA; time to do some time with the men...

I asked God why. Why would you send me some place where you do the talking with your hands. A place where you can catch new charges so easily and keep you in the system 'til days on end.

I waited for days for an answer from You, Lord. I thought You had forsaken me; I thought prison is where You are sending me to be condemned. Then I realized You were speaking to me the whole time telling me that even if it leaves my friends and family in sorrow and despair, even though it leaves my mother streaming with tears, even though it leaves my father feeling even more guilty for not being there for me to raise me right, that is where I belong. This is where I obtain my spiritual strength. This is where I become a man.

Heavenly Father, this is not my damnation, but my salvation. So I thank You Lord, that you for showing me that this was just all a part of Your plan...

-Viet Tiger, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow! What could we possibly add to this? We cannot know what has led you to this revelation, but we do know that it is a revelation, and that in that revelation is your entire future. You are a teacher; teach!

Heavenly Father, this is not my damnation, but my salvation. So I thank You Lord, that you for showing me that this was just all a part of Your plan...

I'm Tired Of This Stuff

I'm tired of being locked up all the time I don't understand it though

My friends being murdered in the streets like animals
Death in no way is understandable

I'm tired of not knowing where I'm gonna end up in life

I'm tired of not being able to touch my family

When I get to the glass window it snaps me back to reality

For them to baby sit us they get a big salary

I'm tired of getting just ten minute phone calls

Stay in the same area only two times a week we get to walk the hall

I'm tired of being in maximum security

I'm so tired of being told what to do like I'm a little kid

I've been here so many times I'm learning how to live locked up

I'm tired of all this stuff.

-Young Mari, Alameda

From The Beat: We get the picture. We understand that you're getting tired of being trapped in the system. But you gotta face the consequences of your actions. Next time you get an opportunity at freedom don't waste it. Remember how bad it is being stripped from all your privileges. It could be worse. Listen to our writers in prison, doing SHU terms. This is a very important lesson. 'Cause after you get your time over with all this will just be part of your memories.

THE BEAT
WITHIN

Love Stories

Q-vote. Well, about the topic 'love story', I have a real love story to talk about. In my first love experience, bad things and good things happened.

I experienced violence in my relationship and he's the father of my one and a half year old daughter. I love her to death and I just had to let him go, so I did, and now I am happy. I depend on myself and I care about my daughter. But I experienced really bad violence. I was almost killed in front of my daughter by her father. I never called the cops on him because I was scared and didn't want things to get worse. So Beat, I'm out.

- A young mom, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You made the right choice about leaving that situation. There is no excuse for violence. Stay safe. And in the future, if you have reason to fear for your safety, or the safety of your daughter, call for help immediately.

One Day In My 'Hood!

Mission District

The house of the Latin ghetto

Cholos, low-lows, grills

Much other things

The murals in my 'hood,

They say so much

Well, so sick

How my people get so much

Dope, game, yellow, tapes

5/0s rolling throughhhh

The 'hood is hot

Getting married to this Mission District life

Ain't no joke

Two months later

Waking up in a cell

Looking at four walls

Each day of my crazy life

Looking through my window

Getting on my knees

And thank the man

Asking for mercy in the game

Homies been gone every holiday

Now somebody' mom

Gotta wear a black dress again

But like I said before

"Revenge is sweet

But not great, my brada"

And that's how one more day

In my 'hood goes away

-Shadow, San Francisco

From The Beat: When you get on your knees to pray to God, what is it that you ask Him for? Are you asking to be safe while doing things that you know are shady? Are you asking for His protection while you're unwilling to protect His teachings? Or, are you truly asking to be changed, to stop contributing to the negativity and start building your community? If you are not willing to try to live your life according to His laws, how do you think He will answer your prayers?

Last Of A Dying Breed

What's up Beat? Thanks for providing us with this wonderful program to discover some of my hidden talents. I never knew I could be a poet, especially a good one. Thanks for asking me questions and I'm always honored to answer them.

Until next time signing off Lil' Mang.

-Lil' Mang, Alameda

From The Beat: We appreciate the compliment, but of course the best thing you could ever do to make it real would be to keep writing poetry, and putting your thoughts to paper. Live up to these words and bring you the heat/that's the best way you can thank The Beat!

Love Story

Que onda Beater readers? Tonight I'm going to write on the love stories topic, because yes - everyone knows that nothing can stop this tall vato from smiling or keeping me below these shallow waters, but what's really gotten to me lately was that I had this firme hyena on the outs that was writing me for almost two years and I opened up my heart for her and had hecka love for her and put some other honeys to the side because of my loyalty to her and that's what a true man does for someone he loves, que no? Yeah that's me, but all of the a sudden she quit writing, so I wrote her a letter about how I felt, that's bad for her but I had to let her know how I felt because I'm done with little kid games.

She was talking about having my beautiful kids, but I'm not really sure if she worth all that. I don't know if she deserves another chance! But anyways I'm out, to the all the hynas out there: Don't lead your man in the wrong direction if you're not ready for it, because it adds up, you feel me? Be true about yours!

Well all right, until the pen meets the paper again.

-Smiley, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a truly powerful and honest piece, and we applaud you for sharing it. But you have to also think about things from her point of view - it is hard to be young and have your man be gone. Perhaps she does care about you but isn't ready to have babies yet. Either way, it sounds like you shared your emotions with her and that's the most important thing you could do.

Rescue Me

About two years ago, I went camping with my lady my lady and her family.

One time, we came back from swimming in the lake and we sat down to take a break. But then my girl's mom told us that these black people took our rafts and swam out into the middle of the lake, so we went after them. I got to one of them and he said he couldn't swim, so I told them to float it back.

Then my lady said she was going to swim and get the other one and I said ok. So she started to swim and I looked back and she was under water. So I dove under and grabbed her. She was tired so I put her on my back and took her to shore. Her mom told me how brave I was and, at the end of the day, she told me that she loved me.

-Wright, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Of all the stories in The Beat, this is one of the first we've heard of a real rescue. The best part of the story is that your girl told you she loved you at the end of the day.

Angel

Alone,
afraid,
scared.

Hoping and praying for an angel to rescue me from the dark,

from the hole that grows deeper inside me everyday.

Each day passes and still waiting... there's no angel...

there will never be an angel.

I lose hope.

-Mona, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Maybe you need to be your own angel. Maybe you'll come to realize that you can rescue yourself from the dark. Consider this: in the dark, light is pretty easy to spot. If you spot a dot of brightness, check it out. Maybe it's the real thing, maybe not, but you won't know until you've walked up to it and found out for yourself. In the process, you will have explored the darkness, and come to know it better. What you know better will scare you less. Keep looking for the light. Don't give up. Ask yourself what all the darkness is. Imagine that you're writing a book about it. Instead of thinking of the darkness as your enemy, make it your subject, a subject you are studying. The light will come. And when it does - don't study it. Just enjoy it.

Why?

Why is this world the way it is? Why did God have to take my cousin Slim Thugga and my brother Lil' Dre? Why did the beef get so out of hand? Why do drugs have to take so many lives? Why do gang members kill innocent bystanders?

The reason that I am asking this question is because I want to wonder why people do what they do. They do not care what will happen. People just want the best for themselves. That's why people die over every and anything.

Why... Why... Why... Why...

-Davey-D, San Francisco

From The Beat: All the great religions of the world try to address the selfishness of the human animal, try to teach that until we see ourselves in others, there will always be violence and inequality. But the beginning of wisdom is questions, so we want to encourage you to keep asking and keep searching, even if you never find the answers. Change comes from within, so we want you to think hard about the questions you asked regarding the death of those you loved who were way too young to die. Think of the changes they might have brought about in their own lives to make what happened less likely, and then examine your own life. You have more control of your future than you know. Thank you for this thoughtful piece.

Confused

Don't know what I'm going to do when I get out.
 Hopefully I get off the bad and I get on a good route.
 Ninjas just don't know what they talking 'bout.

They say the first thing that comes out they mouth,
 Trying to keep it real ...which these young ninjas don't
 know nothing about
 Trying to stay straight.
 Ninjas can see the outs

If I go bad then a ninja just gon' see a drought
 street dope and money that's the only thing I know
 about.

Trying to educate my mind, so I'm in for the
 schoolhouse.

I'm constantly leaving the house early,
 'Cause I don't want to hear my mama's mouth.

I love my life, that's why I'm trying to do good,
 But it's hard to do good when you still tuck in the hood.

Ninjas staring with a mug, but it only take one slug
 To get a ninja drugged up in a hospital,
 With IV's and needles, wires all in his body.
 That's the effect of a twelve gauge shot.

No remorse for dude.

In the streets he hard with the heat,
 But he don't know he still can get knocked off his feet.

RIP Jazz, RIP Stuce, we know you in a better place,
 But we still miss yo' face.

God if you got anybody on yo' list take me.
 'Cause I'm tired right here with these phonies.

I miss my bra, but I know he be locked up forever.
 We gone get out and shine through the worse weather
 together.

This right here is something to listen to get off yo' grind
 Use yo' mind, stop wasting time

And go to school

And all the shhh I just said...

I'm still confused.

-Kevon, Alameda

From The Beat: The confusion seems to come from all these different impulses you face. There's a side of you that speaks so eloquently about the horrors of street life, and the need to do something better - go to school, stop wasting time - but then it seems like you like parts of it as well. What is it about the street life that keeps drawing you - and why is it that being at home is hard for you? Maybe if you start to answer these questions, it will be easier to "unconfuse" yourself and find your true path.

This Ain't Hollywood

I don't know where "talk is dead" comes from.

I don't know why they say "talk is dead," because we gon' talk anyway. That's just how it is. The staff just know that they have the higher power, but when we start not listening they start to abuse it and treat us hella bad.

But I don't care, because talk ain't never gone be dead. I would understand why talking would be dead sometimes because some of the dudes be talking hella nonsense, always talking about what they got....

"I got this, I got that, I got gas (guns)," but if they come at me with that I'm gonna put them on blast 'cause most of them be high power faking.

Fake like fiction. Never want to talk about going to school, changing your life around. They say they can't get gassed up thinking they untouchable but in reality ('cause this is the real world) if they keep going the way they going they gone end up dead.

And this ain't Hollywood... if you get hit in the head, you ain't gon' see them a month later on the red carpet.

-Carl, Alameda

From The Beat: Hearing you come at life with this kind of knowledge and truth makes us really hope you make it in life. What is your plan for going to school and turning YOUR life around? Do you have plans for work, apprenticeship, college? How are you taking steps to meet those plans?

Talk is Dead

"Talk is dead" meant to me just another way of just saying "shut up." When I first heard the saying of it, I didn't know what it meant, so I just asked around and I found out. So every time they'd say it, I would just be quiet. I imagined when they said it that there was a talk symbol in a thought bubble that died. So all the time they say it, I follow it.

-Dijon, San Francisco

From The Beat: We love your thought bubble cartoon of "talk" six feet under! Sometimes, especially in large groups (and in court), it's important to know when to speak up and when not to. Sounds like you've learned that lesson well.

Love

What's up Beat? It's me, Pabb, again!

Well, the only way that could be is me and my family are in love so much in my heart forever 'till everlasting life. But while I'm in juvenile hall thinking about my family a lot, I feel sad because I always be seeing my mother cry while I'm still locked up until I'm finish all my business and take care of myself.

Juvenile hall is pretty strict and hard little bit. But nobody won't take me down because I'm trying to be good and stay out of trouble. I'm in a room by myself. That's how I want it because I don't want anybody that try to make me in trouble or trying to get in a fight with me. I just be good and stay away from them. But sometimes it hard because I'm trying my best to cool.

I'm in a room myself praying every night for me and my family. Hopefully I'll make the change better to make my family happy.

Well Beat, that's all. I gotta stop for now. I'll talk to you later on next time. Take care Beat. Much love and respect

-Pabb, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We admire you for seeing that you have to change if you want to stop bringing pain to your family that you love so much. You are trying very hard in here to do the right thing. Now, you have to take that same attitude back outside with you so that you have the courage to say "no" to those things you were doing before, when you know that saying "yes" will only bring your mom more tears. Good luck.

Rescue Me

Rescue me, because I'm lost and need help finding the way to get out. My target is to not get lost again, and be good. I will make sure to respect my mom, do good in school, and be proud of my family.

When someone rescue me, I'm gonna be pleased, and the only one that could save me is myself. I still don't know how to rescue myself, but someday I will be successful.

-Lil' A, San Francisco

From The Beat: We admire you for setting your goals to change, to go to school and be successful, to respect your mom (who has sacrificed so much for you). But don't think you have to make this journey alone. There are many people and programs willing to help you, if you reach out and ask. No one gets to the top without help, and no one gets to the bottom without help. Seek and you shall find.

Dear Mama

Nine months of torture and pain

It hurts so much, but she didn't complain

I'm sorry for making you drop tears for the pass years

I'm sorry for putting you and the family in fear

Screw the world, ain't nobody really care

Can't nobody come between the love that we share

Your baby boy growing up so mama don't worry

Mama I want to take this time to say sorry

Valentines Day coming up so this poem is for you

Mama I know you love me and I love you too

-Tony, Alameda

From The Beat: Your mom is going to be really happy to read this piece, because all your talent and heart show in it. Also - she will have a chance to see that you are facing your challenges with heart, that you are holding onto the things that will keep you strong and solid no matter what else happens.

I'm Sorry

I know I done a lot of bad thing to people, like my mom, dad, grandma, sister, and my whole family. This is why I'm sorry I'm always leaving the house, don't listen to my mom, do what I want, like hurting people, tagging, stealing, and I regret it, because I got locked up for a very long time, and I always think about what I did.

Now I hope I could make things better by not doing the wrong thing I did in the past. I'm sorry for what I did to everybody.

-Lil' T, San Francisco

From The Beat: Your words of apology and regret are important. But even more important are the actions that have to accompany these words. You can't change the things you've done in the past, but you can change the direction you travel in the future. What you do, and not what you say, will be the true measure of your regret.

To My Pops

Well really I ain't got nothing to say to my pops, but I do not like him or love him.

He ain't nothing to me no more. I mean like before my mama wasn't gone he was a father to me, now that she's gone (RIP MAMA) he been like a b---.

I just don't wanna see his face no more. I hate him with all my soul. I just wanna take all my anger out on him. I wish he was dead. I don't wanna say no more. I'm out, screw my dad.

-Rondale, Alameda

From The Beat: We know this piece wasn't easy to write, but we also know that you can't hate what you didn't once love. It sounds like you're dad fell apart in his own way after your mom died, and it's heart breaking to think that you lost him just when you needed him most. Have you talked to him again since that last conversation in jail that hurt you so much? We hope you know that his mistakes are his fault, not yours... you didn't deserve to be left.

Shhh In My Head

What's good wit' da Beat? It that ninja Meez holdin' it down in this weak-ass maximum security. But I'ma write what's on my mind, 'cause these topics ain't doin' it for me.

But the shhh that's on my mind right now is my court date on the 31st 'cause on that day I'ma see if they let me go back to my county or they gone keep me here so they can finish my 707 and try and find me guilty of some shhh. The last time I went to court they was talkin' 'bout some real serious shhh, so I pray that they let me go back to my county.

Some other stuff on my mind is when I'ma get out. I been down since September and I done missed a whole lot of stuff.

Some other things that's on my mind is my goons, 'cause every time I talk to them, it seem like ninjas trying to get at 'em, and I'm like, "Damn, I wish I was out there to get back at them ninjas!" But I'm also thinkin', "Damn! I could be six feet under 'cause bullets don't got no name."

My mom is on my mind 'cause I'm the youngest but I'm hurtin' her the most.

I can't finish 'cause these counselors want the pencils back. But I'ma get at The Beat later.

-Meez, San Francisco

From The Beat: You definitely have a lot on your mind, and there's nothing wrong with that. We really appreciate you laying out as many of your thoughts as you can. All we can tell you is to listen to your own heart and your own head. Don't be twisted by what others say. Of course you want to be back with your boys doing what you do, but at the same time, do you want to keep putting those tears in your mother's eyes? These are things to think seriously about, because you know you can't have one without the other. Who has sacrificed more for you in your life, your "goons" or your mother? Who do you owe more? And what do you owe to yourself, and to your future? Yes, you've missed a whole lot... How much more do you want to miss?

My Homie

Sitting at home, chillin', smokin',
partying with my people

I got so messed up, felt like no man was my equal
I heard a noise

Couple shots rang threw my home
Too little to understand,

I wish my brother and sisters weren't home
Shots keep coming, everybody's in a panic mode.

Until my homie grabbed his gun
out of his dark robe

Worried about my brother and sisters,
too scared to shoot,

And my adrenalin's pumping
My homie peeks outside the door,

then he got to dumping
I still hear shots

I see my homie go on the attack,
a couple of shots and a few seconds later,
I saw him fall right back

He said,

"Close the door he's trying to come in the house"

He said it with a bullet hole in his stomach

Blood coming from his mouth

I feel like my homie saved my family and saved my life
He didn't let that man get in, thank God.

My homie's alright.

- Reggie, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: Do you think that "smoking and partying" are useful to your family as their lives are being threatened? It's unfortunate that you're family's exposed to these dangerous encounters. Maybe you should think about what you expose yourself to so you can avoid these dangerous situations. Stop thinking about yourself and start thinking about those around you.

Rescue Me

Rescue me from this world of hate
 Where love was torn and raised
 Help me stop this slaughter
 Of people killing one another
 Take me to destiny's road
 For I know he taunts me
 In bed where it haunts me
 The lives of many glued to my mind
 No matter how hard I try
 The fatal memories never die
 Murder, a word that makes me shiver
 But always seems like an answer
 A boy who took the lives of may
 With nothing but love, revenge and hate

Rescue me, who will rescue me from the realms of fate?

-Bruce, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Explain how murder can ever be the answer to anything? We (and you) know that this pattern of "love, revenge and hate" only perpetuates the destruction of entire communities, leaving young boys dead and their mothers to weep to their graves. Who can rescue you from this fate? You! By rescuing yourself, you rescue your world as well. If you were not so intelligent, we wouldn't be urging this change on you. But it's clear from this poem that you have a deep insight. Use it to move beyond the spot you find yourself.

It's A Trap!

He told me "shut up, and to get in the shower." I got mad, like so mad I didn't know what to do.

I'm walking back to my room and he yells "Walk straight." He doesn't understand that my thighs hurt because of the exercising my group was doing in the gym. When I tried to tell him he replied with, "Go to your ef-ing room, now." That just got me mad and with all that anger I had inside, I got in a fight and got OP (Off Privileges).

I see it as a trap, a trap to get you deeper and deeper in the system. That's why I hate the law and don't understand it at all. It's a TRAP!!!!

-Tevin, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: It's understandable the hate you feel, but you must remember it's not the Police, DA, Lawyers, or even Probation that put you in the "system". It was you and your action alone that got you put in detention, not every one else. Remember for every action there will be a reaction, whether it's a good one or a bad reaction that can and will only depend on you and your actions.

That's Who I Am

I heard great things from a few people... but two people who stuck out to me were two people who told me I don't have to prove anything to anyone. It hit me, 'cause it was true.

And another thing that I heard was you can't stress while you're in here and it's true too. Because the stress just brings you down and makes you more paranoid, and want to go crazy and it will just give you room time.

I still stress while I'm in here, because I'm not with my loved ones, but I got to tell everyone in here even though I get no your nerves, or I talk too much -- I got to say who I am and I am going through so much right now.

And I ain't afraid to apologize for what I did. But that's who I am and thanks to those inspiring words those two dudes gave me and they know who I am. And I know I don't have to prove anything to no one. So that's who I am.

-Corey, Alameda

From The Beat: Don't stress and be yourself. Those are two incredibly wise lessons, and we thank you for sharing both of them with. We would guess that if everyone in jail took these words to heart, they might not do the things that get them locked up, and they might be able to stay free on the outs. What do you think? Do you think you can apply what you learned in here to your life outside?

Love Behind bars

What's up Beat!

It's so damn hard to be in a relationship while you're in the hall and your partner isn't. In this situation the whole trust issue goes out the window. All the negative things come rushing through my mind. Is he/she at home with someone else? Is he/she gonna wait for me to get out or are they just gonna move on? When theses thoughts come to my mind they bring more stress other than the stress I have about my court dates, my time in the hall, trying be on my best behavior and things like that. So my solution to this problem is just don't come back to the hall!! Period. Point blank. Ha!

Now I've been in this situation before. It put so much extra stress on me to be worrying about him running around messing with this girl and that girl. Now of course I was faithful to him 'cause duh, I was on lockdown! But him on the other hand, I can't be too sure of. I know he missed me and all that, because everywhere we went he was showing me off saying things like "I told you she was coming home soon" and everyone told me how much he missed me by how much he talked about me!

Well, like I said, he undoubtedly missed me but the feeling of insecurity was still inside. I had never heard anything negative about him doing me wrong while I was away but you never know. So in the end I decided I shouldn't put my insecurities behind me and trust him. Because I loved him and was sure he loved me.

-Dominique, Alameda

From The Beat: Dominique, you have beautifully described the difficulty of being in jail while in a relationship. It's not easy! But we are glad to hear you determined to stay out of jail, and also impressed to see you put your fears of betrayal to the side, and try to trust someone you love. We know it's not an easy thing to do.

Lost Love

I was dating a girl for about two years, we were doing great.

We got into a little argument and I grabbed her arm, never hitting her or any of that.

I left here house and burned out, mom called the cops.

I got arrested for domestic violence and the court ordered a restraining order.

I didn't want it and neither did she.

Now I am faced not being able to see the person I love. She's the only person I've ever loved and the court broke up our relationship.

Now it's all over.

-Eric, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing this unfortunate tale of love gone amiss. It is tempting to blame the court or the parents or the system in general, but how would you have acted differently if you could have another go in that situation? It has to be tough inside, but if you really love each other, there will be some light at the end of your path. Stay strong.

To My Unborn Child

I wish I could have had the chance to truly feel you in my womb, but I couldn't handle two. I was all alone in the abortion room, crying to myself.

I wish I could have talked to you, to tell you why I had to make that decision. No matter what I will feel you sometime soon.

-Telle-Boe, Alameda

From The Beat: The part about how "Time heals all wounds is really true, and we promise that as the months turn to years, this loss and sorrow will fade. It will always be there, but it sounds as if you made a decision you knew you had to in your heart. Good luck, and please please please: From now on, practice safe sex!

Jonathan

When I go to my room, all I think about is him and him and him only.

Damn, what is this guy doing to me?

This guy is really getting to me.

I read his letters over and over.

I think about when we first met on the bus.

I think about when we first talked on the phone.

I think about when we first kissed.

Can you believe I even dream about him?

The way I can tell this guy is nice and really cares for me is because he would always tell me to do good and not to mess up.

I remember what he told me: "What's more important - your friends or your freedom?" Damn, I wish I could go back and listen to him.

He was right all the time and I was wrong.

I would always get mad when he would tell me what I was doing was wrong and was only going to get me back here,

but this guy writes me and that's the only thing that makes me happy in here.

Hopefully Jonathan will wait for me 'till I complete my ranch program.

-Loostera, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It sounds like Jonathan is a good guy who is looking out for you. Sometimes it is hard to be with someone who is not getting into trouble but - in the long run - they are better boyfriends.

Thank God I Wasn't Paralyzed

Me I been a sticky predicament, 'cause of when me and my ninjas got into a serious predicament. It started out when we out all night, and we about to go home. We seen our potnas and we picked them up ...

We was deep, and we was going down MLK hittin' 80 mph. We was scrapin', goin' stupid, and the car spinned out and the breaks locked and we ran over a pole. We backed into a gate and then my patnas flew out the car.

I was the only one still in it. I fractured my pelvis bone and Mat had a concussion. I was almost dead, because I was still in the car. My big potnas got me out and I couldn't walk, so I called my mom and she called the ambulance. All I remember was that I was at the children's hospital, and that's how I almost was paralyzed and I couldn't walk for weeks.

But I got back and I was walkin' again. Thank God that I wasn't paralyzed.

-Lt, Alameda

From the Beat: It's a blessing that you got through that ordeal. Now are you more careful when you drive? Because a car, driven recklessly, is just as dangerous as a loaded gun, both for the people inside and other people on the road.

Rescued From Going To The Pinta

When I was about nine years old, I lived with my dad and my dad does and sells dope. Now one night, my dad started running to the back of the house with a lil' plastic grocery bag with dope in it saying that the cops were at the house, so I took the bag and went to the restroom and flushed the dope down the toilet, so when the cops searched the house all they found was a scale and two pipes with dope left in them. So my dad got charged with under-the-influence and violation of probation and I saved my dad from a couple of years in prison.

-Lil' Sapita, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing this memory even though you felt as though it wasn't a good story about rescuing someone, since you were so young and didn't understand what was going on. It is detailed moments like this that make The Beat so powerful.

Normal Mindframe

Damn, Beat I Was Just thinking to myself.

I was thinking, like, why couldn't I have the mind frame I had five years ago before I came to the hall?

Why can't I live a normal square life?

Why couldn't I be a normal kid?

And why I couldn't have the chance to go to High School, and get my education?

And why I got to live the way I do?

I just be overwhelming myself with these crazy questions I don't know why but I'm thinking I'ma try to leave this street life alone and go back and try to get some type of knowledge in my head so I could be something in life. But it all starts with me wanting to change, not words, so I'm gonna show y'all better than I could tell y'all so I'll holler when I'm finished reading.

-Shady Bo, Alameda

From The Beat: You can't go back to your days of innocence, but these five years have given you as much as they took - they've given you wisdom. What have you learned, about where this path would take you, about how it feels to lose your chances, about what it's like to be deprived of freedom? We think you DO want to change. The question is do you want it enough to step into your right destiny in this world?

It's Hard in My Hood

The hard thing about returning home is -- how is your parents gonna think now that you been to jail? Also it's gonna be harder to get a job. Now people see you as a criminal or a gangbanger. I am from Hayward and everybody is cool with me, but now they might see me different, they might see me as trouble.

I saw my mom cry for me at visit and maybe its gonna be different when I get out

It's hard in my hood. I didn't know it till my cousin died. He was shot over a girl. He was the one that taught me everything about this game. Now that she gone it's hard. I cried for him and I still do. RIP Arturo, gone but never forgotten.

-Lil' Los, Alameda

From the Beat: This is what they mean when they talk about getting caught in the system. Like you said, after being locked up you've fallen behind, and everyone is more suspicious. But the good news is that you gain something by being locked up, which is the knowledge of how much you DON'T like being locked up. That can influence you to do the right thing. As for Arturo, let his death be the greatest lesson that he teaches you - which is that you must focus on finding a way out of the hood, so you can live on in his honor.

Talk Is Dead, It's Killing Me

Most of the time on the outs I get to voice my expressions and feelings. But being incarcerated I barely get to ever express my feelings. Especially the most important time--in "the court room,"

My last two courts dates have been waive time, each one. And I haven't been able to express how I felt about that either times, and it hurts! That's basically a month that I've been in here serving time and it doesn't count as time served.

I don't know who to talk to about this situation. I believe my attorney is doing for my best interest, but I feel it is unfair, they never give me time to disagree with the waive time, it feels like I'm stuck in a trap and I'm yelling for help, and people keep walking by as if they don't hear me and I don't exist, it's killing me.

-Taco, Alameda

From The Beat: If you barely get to express your feelings then, we encourage you to do so when every opportunity comes your way, just do it respectfully. You should talk to the people in your corner including your attorney, let him/her know what's up! We hope this experience is enough for you to never throw your freedom away again!

Rescued By Mom

One time I was on the spot chilling wit some ninjas I know and we had just finished smoking some purple.

A few minutes later my mom came around the corner and I got out the car and slapped the shhh out of me and dragged me in the car. I was at home on punishment.

The next day I found out that right after I left, my potna got shot four times, two in the chest and one in the hand. One in the head but he is still alive and getting better but if my mom would of never took me home I would have been the one shot. My mom saved me.

-Limit, Alameda

From The Beat: Your mom did save your life. She knows that hanging around on them corners is only gonna lead you to jail, or getting shot. She's not lying to you, and you would be lying to yourself if you wouldn't admit that either. You need to realize what's important. Hanging around smoking purple or staying the hell out of trouble.

I Seen It

I seen dope fiends going crazy

I stay on my hustle so you can't call me lazy

I seen my cousin dead over who sales the most crack

I seen girls beat and kicked

I seen dogs fighting

I seen a friend shot and fly in the air for several seconds

I seen the pole before we crashed

I seen people in their scrapers

Gas break dip gas

I seen a person get they teeth kicked out of they mouth

I remember seeing when we was going dumb in Hayward with them girls from the south

I seen m potna get hit with a bottle by his daddy

I seen my cousin Kev dipped in the old school caddy

I seen people pass out off too much liquor

I seen Kev and Jesse before I came in here and I miss them.

-Young Mari, Alameda

From The Beat: You've definitely seen it. As you can probably see the outcomes of a person's life whether they're living a negative or positive lifestyle. In life we all see a lot. We see other people make mistakes. And we should learn from other people's mistakes as well as ours. Where do you see yourself in life five years from now? What do you see?

First Kiss

What's up Beat, my name is Maniee and I want to take you back in the day when I got my first kiss. I was 8 years old. I was at home and this girl came up to me and ask did I want to play spin the bottle and I said yes.

So we walked down the street to her house and she had two of her friends were there so I spun the bottle and it landed on this girl and she asked for a kiss and I was shy but I didn't want to just walk away so I close my eyes and moved my mouth to her mouth and we kissed. That was the best day of my life.

-Maniee, Alameda

From The Beat: That's a memory you won't be able to forget. What happened after that? Did you ever see that girl again? Nice piece of writing.

Heartbreak

They say my name is heartbreak,

A boy who cries in the street,

They think I hide in the shadows unable to accept defeat,
 But what do they know about fighting when they're not part of the war?

How can they see the dying,

When they've never been at death's door?

I think my name is danger

Because I know what it means to bleed, I've pulled the trigger
 and held the blade

And wrestled the violent need,

Don't talk about teaching me lessons

'Cause there ain't no more to learn

So walk away and watch your step

And let my little rage burn...

-Li'l' Shadow, Alameda

From The Beat: Do not waste this rage on your violence towards other people who are also named heartbreak and anger - instead direct it towards more poems, more ambition, more of a desire to shout your name to the world so others can see what you are going through. You have a message the world needs to hear.

My Love Stories

First off, my name is Mark. I am a seventeen year old; I have a son and three step-daughters that are my children, because their dad can't do anything for them.

I have been in love for about three to four years. I moved out of my mom's house because her and my step-dad always got in to a fight. I moved in with my girl and now we are having a baby of our own.

I have been taking care of myself for about a year and I had a job doing everything I can for myself and my girl. I love them so much they mean the world to me, I will do anything to go back home to them. She has been through a lot with me and my family problems. She has been through the up's and down's with me.

The love we have for each other is unbreakable. I mean if you can see from my eyes I have been on my own and she is the only one who's been there for me. She means the world to me, so I say put your self in my shoes.

- Mark, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: It's good that you have stepped up to the plate and took responsibility for your child as well as the responsibility for three children that are not yours. What you did and are doing not many would do. Now that you know your priorities, get focused finish probation and continued doing what you have to do to stay out of detention for you and your children.

Even Though I Never Knew You

Dear Mom,

Hey Mom, you know you probably don't know who I am but your last-born son. I'm writing you now because I finally found you.

I have some questions for you. Where were you when I was born? Did you know that I was born? Did you bother to pick me up from the hospital? Did you wonder where I was? Did you wonder what I was doing?

I used to dream about you all the time. I would wonder what it would be like when I met you. What is your favorite color? I used to wonder what footsteps I would follow when I got older. Dream was the love, Ma. I guess I have to create the track from dirt and make a high way to walk from.

Well, I love you, ma. Love, Momo, your last son....even though I never knew you.

-Momo, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a beautiful piece, Momo, full of heart and love. It might sound crazy to say that, given that it's a sad story you tell, but then you come back from it, saying you need to make a "high way to walk from." That shows courage and strength - and though your mother may have had some terrible burdens to keep her from being there for you the way you'd like, she carried you for 9 months and gave you life, and we promise you she loves you from the bottom of her broken heart.

Alone

At night all day alone in my room.

It sucks it's boring nothing to do.

All I do is read and look out the window.

Time goes by like a snail crawling.

Nothing to do in my room.

I have come to treasure the small things
 like cold water, nice mattress, and walking to the café in
 the open air.

I've been here almost three months but feels like three
 years.

-Andy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It's not a fun experience being locked up and stripped away from your privileges. But now you know how valuable your freedom is. We hope you learn from this experience. When you get out remember that getting in trouble is only gonna bring you right back to places like this.

To Show That We're Not All Failures

Being here means much more than just looking tough for your crimes.

To be in here in my view teaches me to value my outside life, and learn to wake up.

Think how much your parents go through to raise you and look out for you, why disrespect that by ending up in here? Being here has taught me the value of family, and that don't want to disappoint my loved ones anymore. Because at times you can commit the worst crime, but in the end only family will always be there for you.

So much time to think, but a lesson as well. Learn and make up, that's how I feel from this experience, and it's not only words but also to show we all are not failures.

-Dillon

From The Beat: Right - it's not a failure unless you refuse to try again. The only thing we'd add to this is that there are some detainees whose families haven't been there for them, and that's part of why they don't try to change. We would just add that even if someone's family - aunt, mother, father, grandmother - made terrible mistakes, everyone in here has a chance to be a success.

Still Here

What's good with The Beat? It's Monique again. Man. Yup, I'm still here unfortunately, waiting to see when I can receive another court date. 'Cause this just ain't gonna work. It really sucks. I should've been out like two weeks ago. But it's good because I'm waiting patiently even though I don't want to but I have to. I can't wait until I do get out though because being in here just ain't coo'.

When I'm up in my room it's hecka boring of course, it's been a month one week and fove days. Man, when I get out I really need to change for real 'cause bangin' ain't gonna get me know where but in here or Santa Rita 'cause I'm about to be 18.

I need to focus on a career. I want to become a pharmacy technician or nurse and get it together, feel me. I'm gonna cut it short-- all stay up and stay out! One love, gone do it big for 2008.

- Monique

From The Beat: It's great to hear you thinking of the future Monique! You have the smarts to do it--and you can develop the focus and discipline. We hope 2008 is a year of change for you!

Love Story

What's up Beat this is the homie Reyes from San Jose. And I'm about to tell you about a love story.

I was in 7th grade and I met this girl named Jessica. She was hella pretty, and then when we met, I got her number and she got mine. So we started talking, and then one year later we got together, we were together for several years.

Then she went to another school. And a couple of months later she tells me that she's talking to another guy. And me I got mad and hung up on her. She calls me back a couple weeks later telling me that the other guy cheated on her and all this other stuff.

And I turned around and told her like this, don't leave the one you love for the one you like because the one you love will leave you for the one they like. And when she asked for me back I told her I was with someone else, and we left it at that.

And now the girl I'm talking to is hella coo'. And we are still together. Well that was my love story. But whatever.

-Reyes

From The Beat: That's some deep wisdom. On the one hand, it's good that she appreciated you in the end. On the other hand, no one likes to feel like a yoyo. What is this new relationship like? And do you think either of you would ever do something like that to the other?

Leaving Soon

What it do Beat? This is Jacqueline, just letting y'all know that I'm leaving on March 12. But they said they don't know if I am going home or group home cause they want me to come home.

But all I want to do is tell y'all that this time I am staying out of jail 'cause it's not the thing for me at all.

-Jacqueline

From The Beat: We are glad to hear it! But we want to know more, as in - what concrete changes will you have to make in your life to keep this promise you are making to yourself? Break it down!

My Life Story

Here I go. Well shhh... it all started at age 6 when I witnessed my step dad hating on my mother. I tried to fight him, but he was too big for me. I've been on medication ever since age 7.

When I was 8 years old I snorted angel dust, and then when I was 11 years old I drunk a Mickey. Man, I can't lie that shhh was nasty. At ages 7, 9, 11, 14 I was sent to mental hospitals because I had threaten to kill my self.... For all I know I'm still labeled as 5150 that's just what they said then.

At, that I gotta stay away just around the corner from my house you tell me is that stupid or not? Well shhh I was born and raised in Oakland, and shhh ain't been the same for me since then.

I don't want to dwell on my life so much. Catch me on the rebound and I'll see y'all in 2009 peace!!

-Lil' Miami

From The Beat: We wouldn't want you to have to dwell too much on your life, for sure. But we have to say, you have experienced so much that you have a lot to say, to teach, and to share. You know how they say "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger." Do you think that's true?

Why I Ran

My best friend got killed. I had ran from camp because of that but I'm back up here and I'm about to get out...

So to all y'all that's getting out, be cool. My brother got hit up, but beside that, be cool and stay safe.

-Nario

From The Beat: We're sorry about your loss, and very proud of yourself for turning yourself in! Good luck on the outs, and stay in touch.

Rescue Me

What's up Beat, this your boy Crazy from Oakland writing you once again. The time when I was like "damn, someone got to save me was when I got caught for my case attempted murder."

At that time I needed someone to rescue me

.... Or the time when I got stabbed in my stomach. I was bleeding like a water fountain.

Or the time when I got shot.'

I got a lot of things that I can't write on this paper but there was a lot of rescue me stories.

The other one I want to say is when I cussed out 5.0 and they dropped me off in a gang related spot and beat me up.

Well Beat, I'm out but not for long.

-Crazy

From The Beat: It's like each one of these instances could in itself be made into a movie. You've seen more by your teens than most of us go through in a whole lifetime. It builds up to such high levels of stress and fear and rage - do you ever wonder what your life would have been like if you'd been born to another time, another country, another place? We are looking forward to reading your life story, so we can learn more about who made you the person you are today.

Smart Homie Girl

What's up Beat Within? This is your girlie Melissa coming at you from Hayward. Well, I'm in juvenile hall for my third time.

I go to San Lorenzo high, I'm a smart home girl, but I just made a mistake. And I learned my lesson. I won't do it again.

I'm sorry mom for the pain. To my little sister, mija, te amo (girl I love you a lot). To baby Johnathan, baby I love you more than anything. Forever and ever me and you. Yeah, I know y'all thinking "wow, three full months of a relationship." But it feels longer then that. I love you. The day I get out of here I'm gonna go see my knight shining armor. Mi amor con todo mi codazon. (My love with all my heart).

All I want to say is to all y'all in juvnile hall, let time go as it is. Keep y'all head up high and stay strong. To all my people that died, RIP to Arturo Romero, Jimmy Romeriz, Rip to all my home boys. Y'all be missed.

To my homegirls I got mad love for the both of y'all. I know that you'll stay by my side. Always and forever we'll be together me and my familia (family) I love you all I miss y'all.

Mom sorry for the pain I did to you. Sorry I hit you. Nobody can take your place. Sorry mommy. You my one an only mom, my main reason why I'm here on earth. Te queiro mi mama. To my little sister Christina, I'll be home soon. Stay in school and DON'T fall into my foot steps. I know I should be setting a good example, but it's mom that called the 5.0 on me. Maybe I should start thinking before doing my camera act, feel me. To my first love, Lil' E, your name is everywhere I go on my heart.

Ok later to all my young ones. One love.

-Melissa

From The Beat: You talk about wanting to set a good example for your little sister, but then it sounds like you are blaming your mother for putting you in jail. Do you think it's time to take responsibility for your own actions? Why do you think your mother felt she had to finally call the police? Maybe that's what you need to explain to your sister.

Phone Problems Or Is It Love Problems

When you told me you were living your dream making music, and you were in the studio, I respected your goals and dreams.

When I first heard your voice I knew you was heaven sent because you touched my heart. When I got in to your sexy caddie I immediately felt comfortable....

Now you don't even pick up your phone or answer my texts anymore. The last words were 'I hate you' and mines were too.

Somehow so quickly I loved you. Not because you're a rapper, but because I really- really do have feelings for you. Man, it's the God honest truth how did I feel those feeling so fast? I don't even know.

I'm a Virgo, you a Leo. I love you boy, I know you couldn't have forgot about me that quick. All the texts the voice mails the missed calls... I know you busy but I know you feel for me too because our situation is kind of scary. When you said you hated me I knew it really meant something else. I'm not sure but I hope you be a super star. I hope the best for you...

Pick up the phone because I'm gonna keep calling you until you pick up and talk to me. Be with me and love me. I'll be calling you soon.

-Tori

From The Beat: Tori, you're talking about a complicated-sounding situation, and we don't have advice to give you about your love life, but we hope that like your friend, you start living your own dream. What are YOUR goals and dreams Tori?

Do What I Can

What am I going to do
When I hit the streets again
Go to school

Follow the rules
And do what I can.

A ninja's trying to get this money
But I can go legit,
And do the same thang
And stack the same chips.

-Kevin

From The Beat: How do you intend to go legit, Kevin? What is your plan? Do you have a good-paying job waiting for you on the outs?

Talk Is Alive!

Talk is dead, talk is dead, those words replying in my head.

We can't laugh, to me county rules all go in the trash.

I hate this place, talk is dead,
no laughing, don't smile, don't blink, don't think.
They want to think they control me but doing that is like
getting bit by a bumble bee,
how is talk dead when we have a mouth? They think we
deaf? T

hey're the only people I can't talk to.
They might think we're animals 'cause they lock us
behind them doors....
but to me talk is alive.

- The Bossy B

From The Beat: And the written word is alive too, Bossy B. While we empathize with the frustration you and many other writers have written about "talk is dead" we truly hope you are able to avoid the situation altogether by staying out of jail. Using your talk and your written word to better your future on the outside.

Hated By Many

There are a lot of haters out
Out there speaking on me
Most of them is people that
Say they know me but really
Don't but all I got to say is that
I not mad I never mad I love hater
So keep hating

-Lil' Ols

From The Beat: There will always be "haters" out there - people who have no faith in us, or want to fight, or put you down. But the secret to overcoming is right here in this poem: If you love yourself, the hate can't touch you!

What Is Love?

What is love? Is something you want or have?
And once you have it what to you do with it?
Do you throw it away like it was never there?

And act as if you never cared?

All of us hurt, you're just afraid to say it!

Don't let it go it's your turn to save it!

Try like you never tried before in your life

Until you finally get it to perfect or right,

Do it for you, especially your girl

'Cause you know she deserves everything in the world.

You only get one chance when it comes

So really ask yourself homie,

What is this thing called love?

-Baby L

From The Beat: We love the question you ask, and the skilled poetics of how you ask it, but now you've got us itching for the answer! What is the answer? What does love mean to you? That could be a topic for your next poem...

Easy Program

Talking is dead to me means to stop talking and stay silent.

People still talk, but I stay quiet because I don't want to get in trouble. I came to camp so I can get better and learn more.

I was messing up when I was on the outs so they gave me a camp commitment to come to camp. People told me to run on the first day, but I didn't because I said to myself I wanted to do a good program.

I stayed here for about two weeks now and it's been kind of fun because it's a easy ass program. I have about a week and a half till I get my home pass, and then I'm going to go out and eat then visit my family and stuff.

The second thing I'm going to do is to call some of the homeboys up and go kick it and go out to eat again. After all that I'm going to shower and come back to camp and do another good program and continue to do a good program and go home again and eat and shower and sleep. (Most of my friends are positive but some aren't. But it's good no one's bringing me down)

-Derrick

From The Beat: You seem to have the right mind-frame to get through camp in a good way. Are you learning things in camp that will help you get your life together after your release? Do you plan to go to college, for example? And have you talked to your PO about help finding a job?

Complaining

I'm complaining about staff. I know they say life is what you make it, and I know I made a bad decision. That's why I'm here. I know that I must pay the consequences. But I think that sometimes the staff takes it too far.

They say staff is here for custody, care, and control, but I think sometimes certain staff members like to hear themselves talk. I think that having us under their control makes them feel important. I'm not saying I don't mess up sometimes and deserve to be told what's right, but to go on and on about the same thing is pointless.

I also don't like how we have to take a five minute shower that really only seem like two and then put on the same clothes we just had on in PE.

I also don't like that talk is always dead. When did it die? It seems like we can never get a word out. When exactly can we talk?

-Listen Up

From The Beat: We think you know the answer to your last question. You are paying the consequences for your decision now, but you are one of the lucky ones. You WILL get another chance and see freedom! So we hope you make good use of it, so you never have to change into sweaty clothes again.

Angry Piece... What Can We do?

We can't talk

We can't have fun

We can't do what we want to do

We can't break a rule

So what the heck you expect us to do?

We can't strike

We can't refuse

'Cause if we do they'll pop a scan on you,

I am feed up with this,

But you say don't come to jail

Matter fact don't come to work see if I give a heck

-Sexy and Sophisticated

From The Beat: The reality is, you are in jail right now. If you could have fun and do what you wanted in jail, would anyone be deterred from coming again? If you had the power to design a juvenile hall facility, how would you do it?

A Question

So many youngsters straight die every year

So many mother have so many tears

So many brothers go to jail with no bail

So many brothers doing life straight going through hell

And that leaves me with a question....

Will my people prevail or will we fail and become extinct

Or we link up and work together against the man.

But for now I gotta go, so talk....

-My Thoughts

From The Beat: We see examples of success every day - from Baron Davis getting out of the ghetto to shoot hoops (and movies) to Barack Obama running for president, to some of the staff in the Hall who really care about their young people because they remember what the streets are like, to people like you... who raise the difficult questions when they could just be complaining about county food. So our answer is that yes - you can prevail, but you know what they say: "BE the change you wish to see".

Fantasy

Love is sweet like the tootsie rolls.

The brown sugar in a sister, it makes me curl my feet.

Her long hair and pretty eyes is more than a speech.

Lingerie and pumps make me want to lick her from her head to her feet.

The words more and yes is all I can teach.

We fantasy everyday about us on the beach.

Love is passion so listen to the heart as it skips its beep.

This is my fantasy ...

In my room as I read this speech.

-Jeremy

From The Beat: Once you get out, you can start making all your fantasy's come true. Not just your dreams about girls, but also about your life and where you want to go with it. What do you want from your life? Your future?

A Message About Camp

This Lil' Twone from camp ... I'm just letting y'all know what's up. I'm trying do this program to you ninjas in the hall. Keep ya' head up and stay solid and to the staff what's up, Ms. Taylor off the tops.

Camp is a easy ass program, you feel me. You stay out mostly all day, no room just a dorm. You can talk whenever you want and when you get a visit, your mom could bring you anything... unlike the hall. Just letting you know Twone out.

-Lil' Twone

From The Beat: We hope that this message gives some hope to the young people in the hall waiting for their turn. How is school at camp compared with school in the hall? Harder? Easier?

Talk Ain't Dead

How is talk dead if it was never alive?

If you look in the dictionary it say talk is to express speech,

To utter words. It doesn't say talk is dead

Talking, i.e. the freedom of speech is in the constitution

So why should I get room time for exercising my rights?

Well I say talk is never dead because one always has something to say! So why should I have to bite my tongue

when everyone in this institution can't keep theirs' still?

So I am going to keep talking as long as I have a tongue,

beautiful lips and mackin' words to speak.

-Sexy and Sophisticated

From The Beat: Glad to read you alive and well on these pages. We hope you keep using your tongue and your smarts when you get out of here! You have a lot of intelligence and spunk and if you could just focus that, there is so much you could do in this life!

Stop Bangin ASAP

What's good with The Beat? This is Tweety again, well I'm about to tell you something. First of all, I'm going to start off by saying I have to stop gang bangin' 'cause that doesn't get me anywhere but in here, you feel me?

And man, you just don't know how I feel, so I'm gonna tell you since you don't know. I feel heka anxious 'cause I should be out soon, yeeee. I just can't wait. I finally get to see my boyfriend Carlos and most of all my family I haven't seen them all in two months. As soon as they tell me I got a release I'm about to throw everything out my room. Well, you should know now but I'm heka excited I don't know what else to say. So Beat I gotta cut this short.

-Tweety

From The Beat: We are glad to hear that you are getting out soon, and that you want to stop gang banging, but the question is, **HOW** you are going to stop. You need a plan. Have you started thinking about one?

Today is My Birthday

Today is my 16th birthday and I'm in Camp Sweeney. I hate this shhh. I wanna be at home celebrating my birthday instead of being here ...I hope next year I can be at home.

Rest in peace Grashanda, Jae, Stevie.

Last year I got drunk and high on my birthday.

I'm feeling real bad today and no one knows how bad I feel. Every birthday someone would bring me money and food.

-Lil' Bj

From The Beat: Ugh - that's terrible. We are sorry you have to have such an "unsweet" 16. The only thing we do hope is that you remember this feeling, really try to hold onto it, so that you can commit to promising yourself that you will never let this happen again, and you'll never let yourself spend your birthday in a lonely place. Happy Birthday with all our hearts, from The Beat.

My Lil' Baby

I'm gonna let The Beat in on a lil' love story ...I'm gonna get it poppin'.

My most recent lil' so-called love story was on Veteran's Day of last year. I woke up early, thinking it was a school day ...but we had a day off. I still did my normal routine, ironed my clothes, then ate my breakfast and almost left the house, but I called my lil' baby Riah and found out there was no school that day.

I told her to come through and spend the day with me. It took her about five minutes to convince her, but she finally said yes and when she finally got through, I was happier than a seven year old on Christmas.

So we got down to the nitty gritty ... plus she was extra pretty. The whole time we just sat on the bed and cupcaked, talked about a lot of things important to keep a solid relationship together. That's why she staying solid by my side, and we been together for several plus months. I been in here three months, so what do that tell you? I miss my lil' boo baby 'cause she is my world. Give it all up for her 'cause she is just what I need.

Keep it solid...just me and you know I love and miss you Christian and Riah always and forever.

-Lil' Solid

From The Beat: It sounds like you got lucky, and met a girl who has beauty on the inside and on the outs. Do you think these feelings will help you overcome the dark things you've seen and the loss you've faced? Like you say "A Seven year old on Christmas." You've suffered enough, and you deserve some happiness. What will you need to do to stay out of jail so you can be happy and enjoy your freedom without needing those 5 Ps? (Or the S)

I Can't Wait

I can't wait until my baby is due, because I know that I will be a good mother to my son and I go through a lot of feelings when my baby moves. Every time I say this boy's name (Tony) the baby turns and starts kicking, and every time I say a few girls' names my baby also turns, even with the staff.

I know my baby can't wait to see his mommy, and every time, I can also feel him when he don't like some of the food I eat 'cause he is mad. He starts to do the kicking and giving me pain. But I can't wait to leave 'cause I have been here for too long. I have to say when I first came to jail I was three months now I am six months pregnant.

I can't wait until my baby is due, because I know he is going to be a strong young man who is going to stay out of trouble and not do what I did. Well Beat I get to you when paper and pencil meet again.

-Lil' A One Jr

From The Beat: Becoming a mother is a huge step, yes! It's good to hear you being so confident that you will raise him to be a "strong young man." Now tell us how you will do it? Do you have help from your family? Is the baby daddy in the picture? Do you have a job waiting for you? Tell us about your plans for the success of your new family.

Keep it Coo'

What's up Beat, this is Lil' Capy from camp. I'm just up here with the homies just doing my time. I should be out by late April. I should have been out in a couple of weeks, but I ran ...but I ain't tripping.

I'm gonna start getting home passes, so I'm gonna be out in the touch doing my thang like always. When I'm gonna get my first home pass I'm gonna go home eat, then smoke a Newport, then go outside and ride around Oakland 'till I got to go back to camp.

I will go to my friend's shop and kick it for a coo' minute, then cut back to the hood and post and kick it with the homies. I'm just gonna keep it coo' out there don't get caught doing any hot shhh out there. I'm just gonna be with my older homies, drink a little and just kick back on the spot.

They'll tell me do my time and to keep it solid up there.

-Lil' Capy

From The Beat: Reading things like this stresses us out - because we don't want to see you back in here, or hurting somewhere out there. There's really only one way not to get caught up, and that's to stay away from criminal friends and associates for a while. Once you get your life together, you can go back to the loved ones you care about and try to help them with their lives, but first, when are you going to take control of your own future?

When I'm In Jail

When I'm in jail, that's when I start to think about what I've done.

When I'm in jail, that's when I don't want to be grown and I just want to go home with my dad and grandma.

When I'm on the outs I don't think about consequences or about whether my family is worried about me.

I just worry about being grown.

When I'm in jail that's when I cry and want to go home.

But now when I get out its going to be different —I'm going to stay out where I don't have to worry about when I'm in jail.

-Lil' Sweetie

From The Beat: We hope you don't come back to jail, but we also hope that you do start doing some of the things you do when you are in jail— like thinking about consequences of your actions and the pain you cause your family. Is there a way you can do this on the outside? If you don't do it, we are afraid that you will end up back on the inside.

Crazy

When you're in jail it makes you feel like you're crazy because all you're doing is sitting in a room with a built-in bathroom and that gets to you after a while. When I'm in my room all I do is read and sleep, that's all. When you're out of your room it feels the same because you can't talk to the girls in here so you're just looking at each other.

When I'm not in jail I don't feel crazy, I feel like a regular person so that gives me an idea to stay the heck out of jail. So do not, I repeat do not come to jail unless you're already crazy.

-Lil' Sweetie

From The Beat: The whole purpose of jail is for you to hate it and hopefully wake up. The idea is that you hate it so much, you'll never be back.

Rescue Me: A Puddle of Blood

I was out on the spot all night, shooting dice, and this gray Regal kept riding by. Then I told my big bro', so he pulled out the forty-five...so I'm thinking we safe, but then I saw somebody creeping in the alleyway.

I called big bro', but before my bro could shoot I seen them pull out a Mac 11. I told my bro to run, and they started spraying ...'bout that time I looked back and one of the dudes who was shooting dice was hit.

That's the first time I saw someone got shot with a puddle of blood around them.

I just thank God that me and my bro' got out of there.

-Corey

From The Beat: Wow, did this near death experience terrify you? It must have. Did it also make you and your brother more careful? The majority of Oakland shootings take place after ten o'clock at night - so if you really want to respect this 'second chance' you got, try to remember not to be on the street when all the killings happen. Guns don't make you safer, just more reckless.

Bad Moments

I have a friend who is nice and is going through a hard period of time. I don't know how he might feel, but I am having a feeling that he feels bad.

I advise him to behave to solve his problem and be happy like before, so he can do what a happy person does when being happy.

I hope he resolve his problem.

-Bugs

From The Beat: You must be a good friend, to be thinking about another person's feeling this way. If you were in his position, what do you think you would most need in order to make yourself feel better?

Time At Camp

The time I spent at camp is only been a little while.

I only been here about 25 days, and I am getting ready this weekend to go on my first home pass. I can't wait. I'm trying my best to stay out of trouble, but the closer I get, the more problems I am running into.

It's only so much that a person can do not to lose it and right now I'm at that point of time... But I am gon' try to keep my head up and do me, and not let nobody get to me its gone be hard but I got to try. The people in camp love to run their mouth and make me mad, but I always tell myself I'm going home in a couple of days.

-Jh

From The Beat: It's good that you wrote off your stress instead of acting on it, and it's good that you have been keeping yourself in check by remembering the long term goals that are truly important to you!

Complaining

I'm complaining about everything.

I'm tired of my girl tripping.

I'm tired of being locked up.

I'm tired of the system.

I'm tired of the staff here.

I'm tired of my mom tripping.

I'm tired people treating me like a kid cause age ain't nothing but a number, and I know I'm a man.

I'm tired of these j-cats who be running their mouth and ain't bout to do nothing. I'm tired of the bull jacking these punks got these people thinking ...get off me and leave me to my business!

-Spwarv

From The Beat: What makes us glad is that the more you complain on paper, meaning the more stress you put on paper and express, the less likely you are to snap or suddenly flash and do something that hurts you in the long run. Complaining is actually a good thing, because it's a way of blowing off steam, and behaving like an adult... Like you say, it's about maturity, not years.

Cold World

The streets are ugly,

The girls are lovely,

The plans are deadly,

The wars are bloody,

Don't act like I never told ya',

Best of luck like a four-leaf clover,

My mind is focused so I only look forward
too many killing

That's why it's a cold world

eighteen in the game,

I'm Cambodian, don't play me for a fool,

I can fix things up like I'm a tool,

Yeah my name is Big Head and I'm a beast,

Crazy and wild from the leash,

Think before you sleep,

I live by the street.

-Big Head

From The Beat: You're smart enough that the only person who could every play you for a fool would be yourself - IF you don't give up that street life. We know you could - you get closer to freedom by the day. Will you hold on to that freedom once you win it, or throw it away?

Motivated

I'm so cold when I cry

My tears freeze and shatter as they fly

Hit the floor corrupt, I erupt ready to destruct

Fists moving like motors, I demolish free loaders

Far too wise, its gold diggers I despise

'Cause I'm a king, you see, even poverty couldn't stop me

Now look you'd think I hit the lottery

Although I still contemplate

An escape from reality, escape from this facility

My body pushes-up, my minds had enough

Inside I erupt, nonstop push ups

Now my body so cut, solid as rocks

I told her these are boulders on my shoulders

But I want some freedom, to make money

And see the sky sunny

No lie, a glimpse of the sky could get me high

-No Hesitation Money's Motivation

From The Beat: We heard you, you want to get money, but what's gonna be the use of all that money if it's gonna bring you back here. There's plenty of ways to get money in a legit way. Plenty ways you just gotta be creative. Don't fall for those quick cheap licks man that's just gonna get you into more trouble. Don't risk your life either because it's not worth it. You just have to realize it. You can still ball by having a legit job, and side hustles.

Adam's Advice From Camp

What's up with it Beat, this is Adam from camp.

What I want to say is if you come up here, do the program and don't run. What other placement do you know that is close to home and go home every weekend? This shhh is hella easy, so if you come do your program, mind your business and don't run.

I been here three months and I don't plan on running. It's too easy to do just listen to staff and won't worry about any problems in camp. I'm telling you, don't run.

-Adam

From The Beat: This is great advice – but we'd also add that at camp they can hook you up with GRE class, extra reading training, counseling, mentorship, and a lot of programs that can make it easier to do well on the outs... so while you're at camp, find something you're interested in and stick to it!

My Ex-Girlfriend

Something that happened to me that was in the moment is this: My girlfriend was out of town, she wasn't the best looking but she had a great personality. While she was away I had met one of the most beautiful girl I had ever seen. A few days went by and we had been fooling around.

Her personality was pretty good but not really the best. When my girlfriend came back I told her what happened and we broke up. The girl I fooled around with went back to Pennsylvania and over time for no reason stopped talking to me and my friend. My ex-girlfriend is still my friend to this day.

-Eddie

From The Beat: It's good that you were honest with your girlfriend, and that you stayed friends. Do you ever wonder if you'll get back together? Because when you get along with someone and really like them, they get more beautiful each day. And beauty doesn't last long if a girl has a weak personality.

I Miss....

Sometime I like to think about all

The little thing we use to do

Some time I thing about all

All the late night we be on the

Phone talk

Me listen to your smile and laugh

When I joke with you

When you use to yell at me about

How stupid I be for making dumb

Decision

I miss the late night when we use

To stay up all night hugging

Sometime I just sit down and think

About how much I miss you Ericka

-Lil' Ols

From The Beat: You had a relationship that brought out the good in you. This is a great thing to search for and hold onto. It sounds like this was a person you could be yourself with. There's no greater gift.

Love

Love is blind

It will take over your mind

If you think it's love

It's truly nothing

It will aggravate your mind

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Love is whatever you make of it. Love is great. Love is a wonderful feeling. Love is not suppose to aggravate your mind. That's not love. Maybe you're confused. Love itself is not blind but maybe the person himself is blind. It's truly great.

Dear Lil' Brother And Sisters

I just want to let y'all know that I really miss y'all.

I think about y'all when I'm behind these closed doors. I know it been a minute since we was all together. I know I ain't a good role model, but I'm just doing what I'm doing. Just keep y'all head up until I get out. I just wish I could really make up all the shhh I been missing. I just can't believe dad really did this to us.

But oh well I really ain't nothing to say so I'm gonna stop this. I love y'all and miss y'all. See y'all when I get out.

-Lil' Rondale

From The Beat: You know there is only one way to "make up" what you've missed, and that is to STOP doing what you've been doing, and get off those dirty streets that are stealing your time, your soul, your love, your future. Can you do that? To take care of your family, to live up to what you have inside, to earn your way back into your baby's life? We believe you can. What would it take?

They Ain't Comin' Back

Yeah, my ninjas gone, but they really ain't because they in my blood. Yah, I'm back in the hall for a gun, almost went to the Y but I'm going to camp for six months. I'm gon' pimp that shhh 'cause I can't keep going to jail. My baby needs me with her right now.

So I am gon' change when I get out and say fight the dumb shhh and get my life together. But I'm always gon' gang and get active for my ninjas who need me.

-Lil' Mel

From The Beat: As you know from what you've seen, all that getting active makes you inactive – as in can't move, or dead or locked in a cell. If you really and truly do believe that you want to get your life together, you need to give up gang living and set your sites on school and a job. Can you do that? Like you said, there are people out there who need you right now.

My World

Well let me tell you about my world. My world is living just to live another day. Most people ask me "What do you care about most" My answer is me. And they tell me why are you so greedy. I tell them, if I were to see you two weeks from now, you wouldn't remember my name. I would remember yours.

So the answer to why I am so greedy is right there.

See people cry about growing up without a dad or a mom, and they cry about living in the ghetto. Well, try doing both at the same time. No mom, no pops, no place to call home. The only thing worth living is trying to stay alive and get an education.

Well, welcome to my world!

-Momo

From The Beat: We would love to see you get greedy – as in, long term greedy, where you spend your time fighting for an education, for good work, for help finding a place to live that isn't in the ghetto. Are you greedy enough for that?

Big Fear

I have a big fear, my big fear is going to trial I'm scared of going to trial. Why? I got people snitching on me. I have statements and everything. They already been to court on me it's looking bad. So right now my biggest fear is going to trial and losing my case.

-Marcus

From The Beat: That's a very hard position to be in and facing years. All we can say is now you have the opportunity to look at your life and see what you want to get out of it. You have to stop making decisions that's gonna put your life or your freedom in jeopardy. Be strong about the situation, and whatever happens we hope you take this time to reflect on your life, from a prison cell or the free world.

What's Up Beat?

It's your homie Smokey from Hayward. I got 120 days left till I get released. These are the responsibilities for me. On the real this is my plan:

Get out live with my mom for a while. Go to adult school and get my GED. Go to a junior or community college for a ten month program for automotives or mechanics. I still smoke oh yeah for sure but I'll work.

Then there's the homies. Oh God the homies what about them? I'll still kick it you know, drink, smoke, but I won't let them influence me. I am my own person no one can make me do anything. I can make choices for myself I got to be a man.

For all those locked down or incarcerated or just a little down... keep your head up you can do anything.

-Smokey

From The Beat: Sounds like you have a tight game plan. Just be careful when you're out kicking it with your homies 'cause anything can happen. We know you said nobody can't make you do anything, but what's gonna happen if you have a little too much to drink and smoke? You're not gonna be in the right mind state to make good decisions. Watch it!! So think about important things like that. All it takes is one mistake and it can land you right back here, or in the adult system.

My Daughter's Eyes

I love my daughter. She is the most beautiful little girl. My daughter has eyes that can make a cold blooded killa want to turn and change his life to good. My daughter has a smile that can light up the darkest place in the world.

I want to get out and give my daughter everything in this world that she needs to make her a very important and successful person in this world, and I wish to dedicate my life to her. To be continued.

-Jd

From The Beat: To be continued is right! Because this is your big chance to move on with your life in a new and beautiful way, to be re-awakened by love for your little girl. We are looking forward to the next chapter.

Complaints!

Well for me I complain when things don't go my way and I get blamed for something that don't go my way I start to complain.

Well for me I been in a position when I was going to get killed and I got in trouble with some OG's getting set up over some money but I kept it moving going my way home.

-Cameron

From The Beat: We all complain when things don't go our way. But what are you doing getting yourself involved in some serious life threatening shhh? You were about to get killed? You need to stay away from situations like that. Once you're dead, you're dead. You need to be a little smarter with the choices you make.

Time

Time -- ain't nothin' like it
It move slow, it move fast
But ain't nothing like it.

Don't waste it on nonsense, use it wise.

Don't cheat yourself treat yourself to a book

Or a test, see how smart you are, don't get hooked

On some dumb shhh it ain't gon' be forever

That you have time it will blow you away like a feather

You better believe me on what I say in this rhyme

Take heed to some knowledge where you still got time.

-Shady Bo

From The Beat: This is a beautiful, wise, poem. It's also a poem that shows the smartest side of you, and the side you should be listening to when you are next tempted to take that wrong path!

My Thoughts in 2008: Music and Lyric Junkie

I know you readers miss me (I know you do).

If I was a music and lyric junkie I'll miss me too.

So Beat what it do, I'm back in here
for scraping a high speed foot chase, a broken ankle a'
abrasions

Is all I got for kicking one on the crooked cop.
All I wanted to do was go bust me a knock and chill on
the spot

And live my life to max but instead I got locked up and
put in max now.

It's time for me to re-examine the facts,
What I could of, should of, would of done not to come
back.

Matter of fact I was doing going to school for my G.E.D.

I had a job but came to jail for a high-speed chase.

The number one contender of this unit, yeah the champ.

This my last time writing, 'cause I'm going to camp

-Shady-bo

From The Beat: Don't waste your skills on a street that kills/The fear gives us chills but we're waitin' on thrills/Cause you've got a talent that can pay the bills/In the studio, at legit work, or a PhD from Mills! See you at camp.

Love

Love is good

Love is great

One day you will find your perfect mate

It can be challenging at times

Good through your heart to yo' spine

It's not a crime

Love is good love is great

-Lover Boy

From The Beat: Love is great. There needs to be a lot more love going around instead of hatred.

Living One Day At A Time

Sheerly (The Beat) gave me this topic to write because I didn't have anything to write about. I look at this topic and I say damn, ten years. I don't even know where I'm going to be at in five years! I live day by day, hour after hour, All I know now is that I'm a stay bangin'.

Keep yo' heads up.

-Dopey

From The Beat: The secret to having a future is believing you deserve one, Dopey. What if we reframed the question: Where do you want to be in ten years? If you weren't trapped in this game, what would be your dream? To start a family? Own a home? Finish school? What would your life be like if you could take the violence out of it?

Un Normal

People say that to me all the time - Just be normal. I'll ask you this one. Are you normal? And describe a normal life. After you do that I'd ask you. If I were to say I'm going to protest for Tongan rights, you would think I'm not normal!

So then you would be talking MLK or Barack Obama. Those are two people who are doing things un "normal." Then I would tell you, "nobody in this world is normal! If you say you are, I'm telling you straight up you a liar!"

Because there is no such thing as a normal person.

-Momo

From The Beat: There's no perfect average to conform to, except maybe on TV, and we all, in our hearts sometimes feel like the only one in the world who really knows what we've been through. Who is asking you to be normal? It's good to see you have set yourself high goals - to fight for the rights of your people. What are some steps you need to take to achieve those goals?

What's Popping?

Yeah I'm still doing this weak ass time. I'm good I just got my shh dropped to something else so I'm good but I still I got to do like a few years in the Y. I just want to hurry up and go so I could do this weak time you know me they can't hold a real ninja down for too long.

They just killed my ninja Nate in a fake drive by. Ninjas don't do drive bys no more.

Yeah when I get out the Y I'm gone do my thang. I got my female game up, dough game up, and my gas game up so I'm good.

-Ro Ro

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear about your friend. But why is there so much senseless acts of violence going on in the street? Don't you young people have any value for life? We hope that you use your time in "Y" wisely and wise up. All that female game, dough game, and gas game ain't gonna matter to anybody in the "Y." You have nobody to impress but yourself.

Complaining

I want to complain about me being in here because I didn't do anything but I was hanging with stupid people. I hate being in here because I have to ask permission to do things or get things. I hate being in my room because it's small and I like moving around. I also hate being in my room because I get to thinking and I go crazy. We need better food.

-Kevin

From The Beat: You didn't do anything? You mean you did. You made the mistake of hanging with stupid people. This is a lesson to be learned. Next time don't hang around people that are doing stupid shh, so you won't get into any trouble.

Rescued

I know one time I was rescued. I was walking down the street, and ninja's started pulling things out talking bout empty yo' pockets. They were tryin' to rob my Asian potna. But when I told them I was from the hood they told me it was good. And started making dude dance. They were shootin' at the ground while he was dodging 'em. Then my folks came walking down the street from a party and started bussin' so the other guys broke (ran) and my life was saved, well maybe not my life but my Asian potna's life end of short autobiography.

-Boe

From The Beat: That was a close call. Why do people rob other people for no reason? Why do you think that everybody thinks it's cool to play with guns but then they get upset when one of their friends, relatives, etc. gets shot?

Always Showing Love

There is a person that showed me love.

My pops show love. Let me tell you how. My family has been through a lot right now. My three older brothers are in jail and me. But I'm not going to follow their direction, hopefully they snap out of it. But anyway my dad is showing all of us love by coming up to see all of us, and bring us stuff.

On the outs my dad be getting mad at me because I bring girls in the house and he kick me out. But every time I go back he let me in and talks to me for like an hour. This happened a lot of times. Anyways he always has open arms to his kids.

-CeyTon

From The Beat: That's love right there. Even though you disrespect him and get in trouble he still comes to see you and brings you things. You should really show the love and appreciation back once you get out. Stop disrespecting him and his house and most importantly stop getting in trouble. Your pops doesn't want to see you or any of your brothers in jail anymore.

Love Stories

I walk by her everyday, she smiles at everything I say, I gave her presents, she gave me her love.

-R

From The Beat: That's a wonderful thing.

Why Call Him A Detainee If You Don't Treat Him Like One?

Shhh, the only thing I have to complain about is the unfair treatment between people in the juvenile detention center. Basically how people who have been here more than eighteen months get special treatment, good food, because they can't eat county beans? Shhh, county beans make everyone shhh. Basically I don't understand why someone should be able to leave his room anytime he wants to or why they can get hella extras and work everyday, twice a day.

I'm not a hater I just don't understand there's thirty detainees. Not one of them is any special then the next. We're all detainees. We should all get the same treatment! Why should one person get to sit on the computer every class while everyone else has work. Basically, I just believe in fair treatment, which in the Juvenile Hall, is not happening. There's no special detainee. He's just a detainee treat him like one.

-Btb

From The Beat: We do understand where you're coming from. But at the same time we are sensing a little jealousy. Cause what if it was the other way around. What if you were getting all the special treatment? Would you still be complaining? Remember, no matter where you go, there's always a person who in one's eyes gets what you call "special treatment."

Love Stories

I have a love story about my family and my girl. The story is I love my family I love my sisters, mom, dad and my brother. I'll do anything for them. Even though sometimes it does not show but I love them. And my love for my girl is a lot. I love her so much I want to get married early. I love her and my daughter Jazmine. When I get out I'm going to give my babies everything. I love them both.

-Jamon

From The Beat: We're glad to hear you be in love. We hope that you realize what's more important in life right now. You have a daughter. She needs her dad around. Stop getting in trouble and coming to jail, because you're missing out on watching your daughter grow. You need to be there for your family.

Complainin'

They're a lot of people that are in the hall that complain too much. For every little thing they complain like for room time, people start crying and bitching about it when it was them that did something wrong in the first place, man up. If you cant handle the time, don't do the crime.

When I get room time, I don't even be trippin' about it, cause we locked up and we suppose to be in our rooms.

So for all them people in here, in the hall, stop complaining and man up, specially if your going to do time an head to a bigger facility. You can't start complaining in the "pen" 'cause everybody is going to take you as a sucka.

-Dams

From The Beat: Everybody loves to complain about things, especially when they're not going their way. We all need to own up and face the consequences of the decisions we make. People complain about county food but why did you come here in the first place. Point is we all need to make better decisions and instead of complaining every time we make a mistake we need to learn how to correct it and not repeat again.

Sphincter

What's good wit' ya'll Beat? I'm doing lightweight cool, just keeping my head up over here in this unit. They trying to send me to ROP or Boys Republic.

I'm probably gonna do it moving on they ass at the airport or something. They got me messed up, on the real.

-Jj

From The Beat: If you do it moving and you get caught again it's just gonna be more time for you. You can either go do your program right now, get your time over with and move on with your life. Or you can keep going on the run and keep catching more time. You can run but you can't hide. How many people do you actually know that get away? Eventually, you'll get caught.

Missing In Action

I sit and wonder how long will I be sitting in a jail
We go to church to go to heaven, but I'm living in hell
The white man got parole, so we can come back and get locked up

They think the years we do just ain't enough

They play mind games just to get to us

They try to give a young ninja forty years for a murder case

Judge so scandalous he don't care that he just took a ninjas child hood away

Even though he can be rehabilitated

I think about the things I did in my past

Running and hitting gates when I see Task

It's a crazy life when the ladies want you for your bread

I rather be M-I-A then D-O-A instead

Being locked up is killing me

If you was made of steel you gon' have to feel me

Life ain't a game I been found that out

I read books so like a tree my brain can sprout

At school I never did listen

They tried to tell me George Washington was the president

When it was really a black man named Henson

Washington was nine after him

I'm never a follower, so you can call me the captain.

-Young Mari

From The Beat: Missing in what kind of action are you talking about? We hope you talking about some positive action. We know you miss having your freedom. It's hard being told what to do and when to do it. But we hope that when you finally get your freedom back you realize how precious it really is and don't take it for granted.

I Brought Myself Here

When I am in juvenile hall I complain, but what's wrong is I'm the one who brought myself into this position.

In juvenile hall there is a lot of things to complain about. The food is nasty, the rooms are cold, fights. T

he thing I hate is that I'm the one who brought myself into this position. I need to stop coming to juvenile hall for little mistakes that I made. Sometimes I regret coming in and out of jail but if I want to grow older then I have to start being good and stay out of jail. Juvenile hall is not a good place. It is for those who commit bad crimes.

The thing I don't like is when my parents call my PO for no reason and say I'm acting up, then I get arrested and brought to jail.

The only complaint I have is when am I gonna get out.

-Ari

From The Beat: You shouldn't be acting out with your parents. If your parents say something to you that you don't like then just ignore 'em, yet follow the rules of their house! Also, follow the rules of your probation and also of your house at least for now that your living with them. When you get older and get your own house then you can make your own rules.

RIP Cousin

About two years ago I woke up like it was a regular Friday I went to school and during brunch I bought some pills off of my cousin.

At lunch I heard there was someone new at my school that claimed the rival gang that I hate. I went up to him wit' my potnas and tried to stab him. He ran until his shoes was off. What a sucka. I didn't get him 'cause he ran too fast. So I went to class after that happen because I didn't think he would snitch. Five O came to my class and got me and locked me up.

The next morning I called my brother and asked him how's everything? He told me my cousin died the night before, the one I bought the pills off of. If I wasn't locked up I would have been there fighting the battle with him. It could have been me gone. Rest In Paradise my cousin N. I'm gonna see you on the other side. I'm gonna do what I gotta do for you.

-Insane Viet

From The Beat: Now let us ask you something. Do you want to die just like your cousin? Why you want to live a life full of pain, funerals, momma's crying? Don't you want to get away from all that? Don't you want to live a life? You only get one life man, you ain't coming back after this one is over. Do you think your cousin that's resting in paradise is anxious to see you up there with him? Don't you think he'd rather see you live a life away from all the negativity that comes from all that gangbanging?

Talk Is Dead

I like it when talk is dead 'cause most of the people are always saying something stupid. Then only time I like it when we talk is when we are having a serious conversation.

When I was on the outs there was plenty of times when they were mad at me, or they just arguing over stupid stuff.

-Beau

From The Beat: We know sometimes we strike up conversations with nothing but nonsense. But what do you like to talk about? What do you consider a serious conversation?

Complaints

Sometimes people be complaining about everything bout being in the hall doing shhh that they know was wrong and want to complain bout it. That's something a fake ninja would do because me I'm solid, and a ninja be acting like they hard and complaining.

-Lil' Twone

From The Beat: What does complaining have to do with being a fake? That doesn't make any sense. Everybody's entitled to their own opinion but you're gonna tell us that you've never complained about anything? There's a difference between whining and complaining. Right now you're complaining about other people complaining, so who's the fake now?

Rescued My Cousin

I remember one time I saved my cousin's life because I went to her house one day and he was really loaded. Then I was just posted there eating and shhh, and my cousin kept going outside for some reason but I didn't know. So then the next time he went outside I saw him rolling a blunt but he could barely roll it 'cause his neck was leaning back. So I took the blunt from him and took him inside and told him to eat, so then I saved him from overdosing.

-Looking Out

From The Beat: Good job on saving your cousin from overdosing. Maybe you should give him some advice on drinking too much. Tell him to cool down. What would have happened if you weren't there to save him? He would have got seriously ill and possibly could have lost his life.

Rest in Paradise Jordan

On August 4, 2007, we lost a soldier. Rest in Paradise Jordan, a real ridah for the set. Never backed down when it came down, always at the spot with the older brah's posted.

He had a baby mama and his baby mama was due on September 2007. Now his baby gotta grow up without no daddy. I remember when you used to rap. Remember when you used to always post at the spot.

We shouldn't have went to that party. We should of just stayed at the spot. Why?

Only God Knows, and gotta respect His call. 'Till my casket drop, you in my heart.

-Tomasi

From The Beat: One more soldier down, yes, but not just for your set ... Jordan died in a war against the death style of the streets, which claims lives from every set, every race, every color. If your faith in God means something to you, then respect His call for peace, for morality, and for putting an end to all these senseless killing.

Memory Of Love

The first time I looked into her eyes I was honestly speechless. I didn't think I could fall in love at such a young age, but that first look she gave me I instantly got butterflies in my stomach, and I wanted to hold her hand and never let go. She made me feel like I was special for the first time. I love her.

-Max

From The Beat: That's very sweet. Where is this girl now? When you get out stop wasting your time getting in trouble, and spend more time with your girl and those who truly care for you.

Wants

I complain about me being in jail and can't go to my girl house.

I can't see my family,

I can't drive my car, and go to clubs,
can't talk to my potna, and can't sleep in my bed.

I need to shave, and I want to make it to the NBA.

Have a wife and two kids.

-Johnathan

From The Beat: We all got wants and we all have needs. But you're here missing out on all those things that you mentioned because of a few mistakes that you've made. You can achieve all your goals. What's stopping you? If you really want it, stop procrastinating and go get it. First stop, the school house!!

Some Advice

What's up to all = out there doing time?

Keep your heads up and be on your toes at all times!

Don let this shhh get to you.

They can't lock us up all our life.

Don let the program do you
be on top of all your shhh!

If you in a group home or in camp
finish your shhh and be Charlie!

Go back in the outs and get your money
because you know we need that green.

This the homie...

-Spider

From The Beat: You offer some advice to everybody but you say that they can't lock you up for the rest of your life, but you're wrong. There are plenty of dudes doing life in the pen that can tell you you're absolutely wrong. If you keep doing what everybody else in the streets is doing then there's only a few outcomes to that. You're either gonna come back here, or to some other facility, or get hurt, or possibly lose your life. And over what? What could possibly mean more than your own life itself?

Close Call!

When I was sixteen me and my cousins were celebrating the Fourth of July at a park. Just after a couple of beers, my cousin started letting off his firecrackers. A couple of folks were across the street because his little teenage brother was with us. When he walked back it seem like everything was all right but after a couple of minutes we heard the gunshots again but this time they were directed at us. My cousin threw me and his little brother behind a table and got shot two times while he was trying to cover us he ended up being ok, but if he hadn't pushed us we might have been the ones that got shot.

-Jovanne

From The Beat: Damn, you're cousin is a very brave person. He really displayed courage and love for you and his little brother. You need to be careful when you're out there on those streets.

Free Us All

What's up Beat? This is yo boy Turk the boss. Yeah, I'm on my way CYA. I can't wait till they come and get me 'cause this hall shhh getting hella old.

I just hope they free my ninja Weezy and Lil E, oh yeah and Stunna Tay. We will all be home soon, and when they do, we coming like Jesus did. That's real.

But yeah I love y'all and do it big and stand tall. Don't let them haters see y'all fall. See me when they free me. I know these haters want to be me.

-Turk

From The Beat: Free everybody for crying out loud! We don't want to see you or any of your potnas in jail especially if you are willing to turn your lives around! But why do you wannabe free if you only gonna go back and do the same thing you were doing and get locked up again.

Complaints

The complaints I got living in my project
from neighbors to the fiends even the landlords.

Everybody complains even us.

We complain 'cause our projects always have blackouts.
I mean serious real blackouts were you couldn't see
nothing.

If I got a dollar for every time my neighbors would
complain I'd be rich.

-Lance

From The Beat: If we'd get a dollar for each Beat writers that complained we'd have enough money to print out The Beat Within magazine in color! What does complaining do? How come you can't sue the landlord for being irresponsible about the whole "light" situation? What else can you do besides complain so you can fix the problem?

Dreams

I always have dreams of my unknown lover

I wake up every time I'm about to touch her

Her skin shines like gold

Her smell is of the sweetest cherries and berries

I can't say always see the beauty mark above her upper lip

Her hair is long to the middle of her back

When I see her in my dreams it's hard to get close

'Cause I get blinded by her beauty

Her mouth moves but I can't hear

'Cause her voice is too precious for my ears

She's always in my dreams

So I know she was made for me

Next time I'm gone tell you who she might be

-Young Mari

From The Beat: Dreams really aren't that far from reality. You could find the girl of your dreams. But you aint gone find her in juvenile hall. So first get your stuff together, stop getting in trouble, and stay out of these facilities. Then you can find yourself the girl of your dreams.

My Hood

What it does Beat?

Another day in my barrio

I remember the time I got shot in the leg wit' a .38...

I went to my varrio con los (with the) homies
they were like, "Hey let's go get some booze."

I told the, "I ain't trippin,

pero yo no tengo feria (but I don't have any money)."

My homie was all like don't trip I got you.

So we got some Hennessey and got torn up.

So, later on that night they cut out

pero (but) they told me,

don't be stupid and walk up and down the barrio (hood).

I told 'em don't trip, nothing going to happen
so they cut out.

It was about 1:00am and a car pulled up

so I went to get my strap

'cause I didn't ever see this car before.

When I came back all I heard was someone yelling

something at me then... boom, boom, boom, boom,
boom.

I started running

then I felt a bullet fly by my cabeza(head)

and one hit me in the thigh

I fell and felt a bullet brush past my back.

That's the day I got shot,

but to me it was another day in my barrio.

-Lil' Sapo

From The Beat: That sounds like an action packed movie. But the only thing about this movie is that there is no super hero. And another thing is that once you die there ain't no coming back. We are not trying to disrespect your way of life but is that the way you want to live? Of course not.

Why I Am In Here?

I'm in here because Hayward Task pulled the car over I was in. I jumped out with a gun in my hand and ran. Task force seen the gun and they was going to shoot me, so then I threw it in some bushes as far as I could and continued to run and hop fences. Then as I was hopping into a backyard the officer shot his tazor at me and missed. Then I was later surrounded and got beat up by the police.

The point of the story is the driver should of high speeded, then I would not be in here.

-Jay

From The Beat: Point of the story is you shouldn't be riding around with the gun in the first place. Why you putting the driver in the hot seat for? You need to take responsibility for your own actions. You're here because you brought yourself here. It's nobody's fault but your own. Mature up.

One Day

One day I was walking around my neighborhood like any other day. When I seen this beautiful young lady walking the opposite direction as me. I pulled next to her and asked her what's her name. But she was being a stuck up female and she kept walking. So I got mad and cussed her out.

I kept walking down the street when I seen the enemy I threw up my hood. They pulled out a gun and started dumping. My homie walking in back of me called my name and I feel like that saved my ass from getting popped.

-Osvaldo

From The Beat: You know what would really save your ass is if you would stop gangbanging, period. If you're gonna keep gangbanging and throwing up your set you better expect rivals to be coming to take your head. That's just the reality of this life. If you're involved with gangs you're gonna come to jail, you're gonna get physically hurt, or you can lose your life! So you choose.

Love Is Deadly

Well I'm gone write a deadly love story to young men. The reason because once you truly start messing with a girl that you get your heart broke! That's why guys do girls bad because of what happen to them in the past with a girl.

Like the time I first starting dating this fine girl, she really like got into my head then she broke me down. But after a while she started liking me again but by then I was a player! The reason we broke up is because I saw her with other ninja! So it made me mad so I start messing with her best friend!

-Rauzzy

From The Beat: Well that's not real love if both of you are gonna be cheating on each other like that. She had bad intentions by cheating on you but that doesn't mean that every girl is the same. You just gotta be more careful next time.

Sober Or High

I'm going insane holding conversations by my lonely
I never feel alone because the demons take a hold of me

Slowly, derailing me off of my train of thoughts

So I pop a pill and sip something so I can clear my
thoughts

Cause it seems like I'm only sober when I'm high

So I stay loaded searching for answers stuck in the sky

All inside, so I look forward to the day when I'm normal

That's when I die.

-Sticky

From The Beat: What are you running from so much that you can't be sober to face this world. Is it too painful? What are you feeling? How do you deal with your problems when you're in jail 'cause there's no pills or drank in there. You're more than welcome to always write down your feelings on paper. But we hope that you can find other alternatives to clear your thoughts besides popping pills and drinking.

Arrested!

I was chilling at home

sound asleep

I heard a knock

it was the police.

I put on my shoes and I was out on these fools.

You know what they said

freeze or we will shoot you dead.

I said hell naw

I was not about to go back to the hall.

I ran out the back and slipped on a baseball.

My world turn black

I woke up and I was in the back of the cop car.

-Whisper

From The Beat: What did you do for the police to come knocking down your door? The best way to stay out the halls is by not breaking the law. How about trying that, and then you might not be waking up and finding yourself in the backseat of a cop car.

The Streets Are Crazy!

Welcome to San Francisco the streets are going crazy. I'm going through Pier 39 wondering, wondering what's on the next person's mind. What they looking at? Keep looking at me. I'm gonna hit them with a bat. That fat boy right there with the curly hair. If you are me look at the other way because remember what they say look longer then ten seconds ain't coo'. Thanks for listening.

-Dylon

From The Beat: The streets are crazy. But instead of walking wondering what other people are thinking maybe you should worry about what you gonna do with yourself. You shouldn't be worried about other people anyway. You got your own personal life to worry about.

Love Is Strong

Love is the heart of the ocean
But hate is the roughness of sand
But love is like the palm of your hand
Waiting to grip your love by the hand shining like the sun
Over and over again saying I love you again.
Dedicated to Neanea

-Demar

From The Beat: Love is strong and can conquer all. That's very nice of you to write a poem for the person that you love. You should let her read it. That way she can see how you feel about her.

What's Up!

I'm tired of these ninjas in here, all they do is whine about that they won't get out in a couple of months.
I wish I could get out in a couple of months. I'm going to do seven months but that's not the point. The point is that you don't have life (in prison), so don't trip, ninjas. You did the crime so do the time. And if you did not do the crime your time will come to show it.

-Nacho

From The Beat: We too get tired of all the complaining. But that's what people do. Some people complain or some actually do something about it. Everybody should stop complaining and instead figure out a game plan which won't bring them back into the hands of the system.

No Love

I don't like love because love gets you hurt.
The last person I loved they hurt me.
That is why I say don't love no one, but my family is a different story.
I love my family because they take good care of me

-Family man

From The Beat: Love is painful sometimes but we live and we learn. So, how can you show your family how much you love them? How can you show your appreciation?

Love Stories

Was up Beat this Chikillo from Oakland. Well I remember when I used to be with my girlfriend everyday I remember all them good things we did together. All them good stuff we did when I was out there and now I'm lock up and I miss her.

I remember when we used to buy her stuff and I just hope I could get out so I could be with her and tell her that I love her hella much well this vato is out Alrato I love you Roxana.

-Juan

From The Beat: Think about your girl next time you're about get yourself into some trouble. Don't think about her when you're here now. Think about how much you're gonna miss her if you keep getting in trouble. On top of that do you think she's gonna want to be with a person that keeps getting locked up?

No Complaining

You'll never hear me complaining. I don't complain like a lot of other people who talk out side of their mouth and talk a lot of shhh.

So when you hear someone complaining stop them for me. So good bye Beat I'm leaving in two days so I'll write to you.

-Desmond

From The Beat: Why don't you complain? And what's wrong with complaining? What about complaining and standing up for your rights? There are things to complain about, you've never complained about anything? Anyhow, best to you friend!

My Love

I have a baby mother that I love. Her name is Francine she is 16 and I been with her for about three years. She is seven months pregnant and we are having a baby boy. His name is going to be Devonte Jr. I love my baby mom and my baby more than anything in the world and I will kill or die or do what ever to keep them taken care of.

-Devonte

From The Beat: If you love your baby mama and your baby more than anything then maybe you should stay outta jail. That's one of the most important things right there. You're baby mama is gonna need you and so is your baby. You're not gonna let your baby grow up without a father are you? Obviously you've made some bad decisions that got you in the halls, but don't let that discourage you. When you get out stay out and help support your family.



Loving My Family

I never love anybody because when you let your guard down who ever you have beef with will try and hurt the person you love to get you. I love my family of course because they're there for me when I need them and put a roof over my head when I need a place to stay.

I love my Auntie Damina because she had a lot going on in the 21 years she been here. I love her because she takes care of my two little cousins, me, and my uncle.

-Shonte

From The Beat: Who's gonna try to hurt your loved ones? Why would you have beef with somebody like that? Are people just seriously filled with so much hatred? That's ridiculous. Why do people hurt innocent people for no reason? What do they get out of that?

Everyday

Man, I hate waking up early in the morning with people yelling at me telling me what to do. Telling me to go outside my room and put on my shoes. Line up, look straight, don't talk, don't move until I tell you to walk. Going in to the classroom with people talking out loud, staff come in the room telling people to shut their mouth. Going back to the unit with barely enough food to eat, that's the end of my day, so then we go to sleep.

-A young detainee

From The Beat: Sounds like a hard day. You have to put up with the staff, nasty food, on top of that barely enough. Why do you come here then? It's not a wonderful place to be. Stay your butt out of jail.

Hear Me Complain

When I complain I feel like nobody hears me. Maybe all y'all that read the Beat will.

My first complaint is how some, not all staff but most of them treat us like when we wrong or right they still say we wrong and how they talk to us. The reason why staff do that is because they don't got no control of they own kids. So they come to work and try to boss us around and treat us like criminals because we made some little mistake. Then they look at our parents like it's they fault and like they did raise us right. Most of the time we come here for little stuff.

-Lil' T

From The Beat: We know some of the staff in the system are hard heads and probably do talk down on many because one is locked up. We know that isn't cool, but the best thing you can do is ignore it. Don't argue even if you know you right let them believe that they are. 'Cause you're not gonna win an argument with them. And keep that in the back of your mind next time you're out there on the street and about to do something that might bring you back here.

Rescue Me!

I'm here writing you this thing about rescuing.

The first time I'd been rescued was when one day I was at the park, I was chilling with my potna and his girlfriend and couple of other girls. Then somebody came to the park and tried to get at the female that was with me. Then he tried to cupcake or whatever, then when they finish talking he got mad, I think because she rejected him or didn't give the dude her number.

So he walked back to his car and came back, his hand was inside of his pocket and he pulled out a duce five and said to the girl and our group, "this is the wrong day to screw with me!"

I ran down the street and saw my cousin with a lot of his friends and called him to come to the park.

Two minutes later my cousin went to the park with all of his friends and they all had weapons. Nothing but big thangs.

I think the stranger got hit and fell and that's the end of the story.

-Baby Al

From The Beat: So is that how you resolve problems? Guns don't solve anything all it does is take people's lives in a split second and put youngsters in jail for life. Once you're dead you can't come back. Why does a gun have to be the solution to every problem?

Staying Out Of Trouble

Well most of the time I get in a whole shhh load of arguments, they mainly are the people I care about like my homies, fam, and even my girlfriends but all this shhh is normal just like wanting to fight someone after an argument. I know what I get out of an argument, is usually I end up in a fight, smoking a blunt or a cigarette, or just go play some b-ball or something to get my mind off shhh.

Since I'm on probation I don't smoke that shhh no more, 'cause of pee tests. And if I get into a fight someone might call the police.

So y'all other people doing this shhh don't do it or get resent to jail.

- Youngster

From The Beat: You know you can't be fighting every time you get into an argument. You are not gone last long at a job, you are not gon' have a steady relationship and nobody is going to wanna be your friend. People get into arguments all the time but that doesn't mean that they have to resort to violence to resolve their problems. We're glad to hear that you're thinking more clear headed now and have realized that you are not trying to waste your time in jail.

Complaining

I be complaining. Like, when I first came here people was getting on my nerves I kept on yelling in my room because I want to go home because this is not the place for me.

I really do not like juvenile hall because I'm not home with my family. My mom is away from me and I really miss her. The food here is nasty the rooms are cold.

I miss my father. My uncle is dead R.I.P Reg and big C.

I just want to be with my family and most of all I am going to try my best not to come back to the hall it's a nasty place to be.

-David

From The Beat: We all complain about the things we don't like. But if people are gonna sit there and complain about Juvenile hall, then why do they come here? We're glad to hear you say that you're gonna try your best and not come back. What's your plan?



My Girl

I remember my girlfriend and all the things we did I miss going to the movies with my girl and being able to hold her. I really love her and it's crazy the way I feel about her.

We got together on September 24, 2007. We've been since. It's really hard to be away from her. Her name is Gabby. I love you baby always and forever.

-Rene

From The Beat: Congratulations on hopefully a wonderful relationship with your girl when you get out! You should be with her right now instead of wasting your time being locked. How do you think she's feeling right now? You should stay out of trouble, at least do it for your girl.

Too Much!

I don't complain I just go 'bout mine, I keep to myself, I don't worry bout nobody else. Same people be complaining too much. I'm just being honest. They complaining and crying 'bout why they in jail. I keep my comments to myself and just don't worry bout nobody else. I can't complain 'cause I got myself here. I just thank God to see another day. I can't complain 'cause God got me here to say what I say. I can't complain.

-Vernell

From The Beat: Like you said you can't be listening to everybody else complain. All you can do is worry about your own program and what you're gonna do so you can stay out of places like these. We can find anything to complain about, why do you think people aren't that grateful for the things they already have?

Straight To The Top

I started selling nuggets
Now my rocks are the size of buckets
No money, man, forget it
Go my own way
Out here all day
I'm gonna do my own thang
Let it all hang
Mission District's finest
My quality is the highest
No cuts, nothing added
You want it; I already had it
Not Ricky Ross or Escobar
Won't let down my guard
I can never fail
I got straight shots, your shots sail
I stand strong, you will flail
You let it rain, I make it hail
I won't stop
I'm on a one-way street
Straight to the top

-Birdman

From The Beat: Who cares how bad you are, especially given your game failed, and now you sit in the county camp selling us a b-s flow about how bad you are. So you are waiting to return home to live the street life one more time. This next go round will you be lucky, or will you most likely get caught up one more time, if not taken out entirely. Good luck in capturing a ridiculous dream.

Don't Forget Who Was Showing You Love

What's Good, Beat? This the ninja, Smoke, up at this weak ass Ranch. I'm gon' to do big thangs wit' my life when I touch down.

But a word to all y'all locked down doing y'all time—man, don't forget who was showing you love while you was down and out, constantly writing or visiting you. Show them the same love when you get out. Don't believe all these lying ass people, talking 'bout they was too busy to write to you or some other damn excuse they tell yo' ass.

That's how you separate your real homies from the fake, that's real talk, but that's all for today, y'all. To all up in the halls, much love from me to you! Do y'all time and hurry up and get out! One love.

-Smokey

From The Beat: Who has been there for you, the whole time you've been in juvy and the Ranch? What do you wish people had done for you while you were locked up? When you're free again, how will you remember your homies who are still locked up and feeling forgotten?

Beat

I'm writing to you about the response you gave me on my last piece. It is nonsense about them turning to God to escape their problems. They shouldn't have to turn to a fictional character to do that. You should want to do it on your free will or for someone in your life that you truly love. And no, I can't leave them alone about their religious beliefs. I'm gonna argue my belief wit' them to see how strong their belief is and to see if they could argue it with me. I know I sound ignorant, but that's just me, man, so hate it or live it, but that's what it's gon' be.

-Smokey

From The Beat: You don't sound ignorant at all. You have a perfect right to challenge anybody's ideas, even those about God. But, maybe there's no final resolution to the questions that philosophers have been arguing over for centuries—whether there's a god or not, and if there is, what is his nature, his design for mankind, if any? You've thought the question way through for yourself, and deciding that there's no god is fine, and maybe you're right. But can you also respect those who disagree with you and believe in and love god?

I Hate The Hall

I hate being in jail.
I hate the food, the way it looks like brains or waste.
I hate the way it tastes.
It tastes like nothing.
You just get full on nothing.
I think its diabetic.
I hate the staff.
I hate being locked up, wasting my time.
I'd rather be having a job, making money,
Being with my girl and having fun.

-Darius

From The Beat: If you hate it so much, why are you here?/Do you plan to make any chances in order to steer clear?/Unless you start playing a different game/You can count on more of the same

Love Story

She got the body of a goddess, everybody knows that
Stupid cute face, and her booty's so fat
She's a good girl and never a brat
Got a ninja ready to drop 24 stacks
Damn, I gotta put her on my team
'Cause she's every man's dream
She's god's gift to earth,
Aloha money, that's what she worth

-The Chosen One

From The Beat: Who is this angel that is waiting behind because you allowed yourself to get locked up? If you're in and she's out, you'll never get past the "dream" stage.

My First Love Netta Boo

My love story is about my ex girlfriend Johnetta. I loved this girl hella much until she broke my heart. But our good times was when we went to take hella pics and had our times by ourselves. When she stop messing with me, I didn't know what to do.

-Afraid To Sign

From The Beat: Don't be lazy! You could write so much more. What did you like about her? Why did she stop messing with you? Where is she now? What do you look for in a girlfriend? Three sentences is not enough to say much of anything!

When I Go To Walden House

When I go to the Walden House, I'm going to be in the program for a minute, then I'm going to see my girlfriend. Then I'm going to the 'hood to chill for a minute. But I don't know. I really don't care. She phony, but it's coo'.

-Chopp

From The Beat: What do you mean you'll be in the program "for a minute?" How long is a minute? What do you hope to get out of the program? If all you're thinking about is getting back to the 'hood to continue your life as before, then expect the same consequences as before. We hope Walden House gives you some skills for how to live and stay safe and free.

My Complaints

What's up? What's cracking? I'm complaining about not being able to lift weights in here. I'm getting tired of going to bed at nine O'clock. If I had a cell phone in my room, I wouldn't mind going to bed early, feel me. That's it till next week.

-No Name

From The Beat: Why complain about what a lock-up is? It won't change a thing. If you have a complaint, it should be that you gave the system power to put you in a place without cell phones, without weights, without girls, without home cooked food, and without the ability to make choices for yourself. Next time you have those choices to make, we advise you to use that freedom to keep yourself free.

Facin' The Truth

When I was a lil' kid, you was my hero, always there holdin' me down in my time of need. When I fell, you helped me up ta dust myself off. When I was hurt or cryin', you were there with open arms takin' the pain away.

I always thought you would live forever. But then I grew up. In and out the halls, foster homes, group homes. I just stayed on the run aka in the system. I worried and worried you, but I never really knew all the pain an' tears I caused you. I never thought you would worry so much that it will infect ya health... 'til I come to the halls fa my last time and you told me that you're dyin' slowly.

The doctor told you that if you have a stroke, then you're six feet, goin' ta the promised land. Those words hurt me more then anything I ever faced. I love you, but dad I guess I had ta face the truth... I messed up, an' no one lives foreva.

-Elmo

From The Beat: It's true, of course, that no one lives forever, which is why it is so important to do the right thing now, while this hero of yours is still in the world. Admitting that you messed up is important, but it's only a beginning. We hope you try to balance the scales, to make up for lost time, by committing yourself to stop messing up and to start doing the things that truly show what you value in life. If you want to honor the person who was always there for you, making sacrifices for you, it's time to begin making sacrifices in return... before it's too late. We hope your dad lives a long, long time, and that you are there for him.

Rescued By A Bus Driver

What's good wit The Beat? It's ya boy Mike writing out of unit 6. I'm 'bout to write up on this topic. I been in a life-or-death situation with my ninjas. We was on the bus, and my ninja was tryin' to get with this female. I told him to lay low so nobody would see us, but he didn't.

The bus left out and I got up and looked back, and I seen some ninjas in the car following us. The bus stopped in front of the post office and some dudes hopped out the van with guns and was tryin' to get on the bus. But the bus driver closed the door and drove off. The bus driver let us off and we ran up the street. They was chasing us the whole way, but we got away. We all thought we was gone die, but they couldn't catch us. That day was hella crazy.

-Mike

From The Beat: First, we're glad you escaped. But we had to take much out of this piece, and you should understand why. No turf names; no street names. And, in a piece that tells about a bus driver who saved your lives, no nonsense like, "We all we got!" If that bus driver had not been so quick to act, you wouldn't have anything at all!

"Talk Should Always Be Dead"

What the deal with YGC? This ya boy lil' Don in unit 6, feel me, I'm on a topic about how talk is dead. I feel like talk should always be dead... in other words NO SNITCHING! People live to run they lip a lot, but it proves nothing. I'd rather observe than talk, soak up game.

But the game done changed. Everywhere you look, some one running they lip snitching. It ain't cool. Ratting is at an all-time high. People need to learn to keep they mouth closed and mind they own business, then they'll be all right. People to nosey. But to keep it real, talk should always be dead. No snitching.

-Lil' Don

From The Beat: We've got news for you, Lil' Don. Things haven't changed as much as you believe they have. It's only because you're young that you think this is different from the past. It's not. The entire criminal justice system, from juvenile hall to death row, is built on a foundation of snitches telling on each other for better treatment. It's always been that way; it always will be that way. There's only one way to make sure this doesn't happen, and that is to stop giving those snitches anything to snitch about.

I'll Keep Your Secrets

Can we get a breath of positivity
We hear the relevance of your words
But I ask with a heart of empathy

Please explain with a little less hostility
I've matured past jumping on the defense
So you don't have to sugar coat or remix

Count on me to keep the essence of your secrets
Tell me what's on your chest, I won't repeat this
I gotta get it on my own while I'm well aware of my own weakness

I know complaining is a vent of its own kind
And please excuse my words 'cause all of them might not rhyme

I got a lot up on my mind
I can't explain it all right now 'cause it's almost bedtime.

-Purple Hayse

From The Beat: This is a mysterious and intriguing poem, LaRhonda, one that makes us want to know much more... like, who are you writing to? What has happened in the past between you that makes you feel the need to reassure that you will keep his/her secrets? What are some of the things you have on your mind? Next time...

Rescue Me

Someone rescued me in court when I had to fight a case when I was in juvenile hall. The one who saved me was my lawyer, and if she didn't stop me from cursing at the victim, the judge and my PO, I would have never got out of this problem. So I owe it to my lawyer because she stop me and said calm down. I could imagine it right now — probably get cuffed and never be able to get out. Now of real, I wouldn't be able to get all y'all, feel me dog! I really owe my lawyer one!

-David

From The Beat: It's nice to read a piece appreciating what your lawyer has done for you. We're curious, though. At the time she told you to calm down, were you grateful to her then, or did you want to cuss her out along with all the others? Sometimes, the experience a lawyer brings into that situation is exactly what you need to rescue you.

Thoughts

Wusup wit' da Beat? Chea, it's ya boi Lil' Rob still in here trying to cope wit' all this b.s. I'm going to talk about how people have thought of me while I've been incarcerated.

First person I'm going to talk about is my PO. She always think negative about me. She thinks that Glen Mills or the Ranch is the best thing for me to do as for out-of-home placement. Also, she thinks that I cannot do better for my family, community, and for myself. But she doesn't know about what I can do better with my life, if she had a little more understanding, of what I can do positive.

Also, the DA constantly pushes this negative line to the judge about me saying I'm a menace to society and shhh... But all he has to say about me is negative. There is nothing positive he has to say about me.

Well Beat, that all I got for you today. Peace and One Love.

-Lil' Rob

From The Beat: Unfortunately, the DA thinks it's his or her job to tell the judge only the negative, so don't look for any change there. As to your PO, nobody (including you) can be sure that she is wrong about Glen Mills. In other words, it's possible that is a good placement for you, but you'll never know until you experience it. If the DA is quoting you describing yourself as "a menace to society," that tells you that in the world of court, words are very powerful things. They mean something. So, what is the positive you want the PO to focus on? What is the positive you want the DA to tell the judge about? What is the positive that will lead you away from where you've been and the life of lock-ups? We'd love to read a piece that focuses only on those positives, and how you plan to use them as a foundation to build a better life.

Rescue Me

Rescue me from this hellhole

Rescue me from my life

Rescue me from poverty

Rescue me, Rescue me, Rescue me!

Rescue me from the ghetto life

Rescue me from pain

Rescue me from my discomfort

Rescue me from the guns

Rescue me from the fear I have of getting shot every day

Please my lord Rescue Me!

-Bigg E

From The Beat: We hope your prayer is answered, but we also believe in the old saying that God helps those that help themselves. Besides praying, what else are you doing to rescue yourself from this life of poverty, pain, guns and incarceration? When you're out, do you go to school? Do you set goals for yourself beyond what is happening on the street, goals for a future in the adult world of freedom? Can you tell us what those plans are and what you are doing to achieve them?

Lots Of Plans

What's good wit' The Beat? It's yo' boy V-Guttah, and yell I'm still in here doin' me, you dig. Damn, now I got to wait until Glen Mills come and get me after my court day. But I aint trippin' 'cause all I need to know is that I'm getting out, I hope all my ninjas gets out when I'm out 'cause I have a lots of plans to do and a lots of money to get, you dig.

-V-Guttah

From The Beat: We sure hope that Glen Mills changes your focus so that those plans you are so hot about include improving your mind, learning about the world beyond the block, and generally preparing yourself to put childish things behind you and become a man. Write us when you get there, and good luck.

Stop Talking

Yo, what's up with The Beat, man? Ah, it's 2008 and talk is dead man, fo' real. Like I got a lot of close friends that live kind of close from me in that mob and they be mostly barkin' and now bitin', especially on the phone. It's time for me to stop talking so much because that ain't finna get you nowhere.

Me, I'm a quiet person, no talking at all, mostly bitin'. But mostly them dudes across the street be doing a lot of yapping and it's time for talk to be dead. I'm out of here. I'ma holla at you next weak.

-Bm

From The Beat: If you're talking about the dirt you do or plan to do while you're on the phone, then your brain hasn't started working yet! The only advice worth giving (even though you're not yet ready to recognize its worth) is to stop doing the things that people can talk about. Talk will never be dead. You can wish it. You can order it. You can threaten it. But as long as you give people information that they can use against you, it's like money in the bank for them. We hope you learn that truth before you make one mistake too many.

Getting' Out

Yo, this yo' boy Co Banga hit you with the no braina. They finally talking about letting da kid out. I'm finna go to Napa some time soon. I got an interview yesterday, and he said they will accept me in to the program or what not.

I don't know if I should run or not yet, but I'ma see once I get there. But yeah, I'ma see y'all when I see y'all. Until then, stay up.

-Lil' Curt

From The Beat: First, congratulations on getting out of here and into a group home. But second, we sure hope that when you say you'll see us when you see us, it won't be back in here. That's where running will lead you. Time for Lil' Curt to become Big Curt. Stop running. That's what

Ready To Get Out

What's good wit' The Beat, dawg? This yo boy Mook keeping it so-so, ready to get out of this thang, ya heard me dawg? Right now I'm missing my BM and my family and goons. I'm 'bout to go to this group home and knock out this time for the good, ya dig.

Today, I don't got nothing to say big dawg. My words getting short so I'm out. I love you lil' bro. Stay up.

-Mook

From The Beat: Tell us more about knocking out your time in a group home "for good." Does that mean you never plan to allow yourself to get locked up again? We hope so, but what's your plan to achieve that goal? It has to include some real changes in how you've been living, so we're all ears. You are capable of writing much, much more than these few sentences.

The System Sets Us Up To Fail!

I got court tomorrow. Hopefully, I will get out of here. I'm guessin' though, that I'ma get sent to another group home. I hope the judge doesn't send me to another one, 'cause I know I might fail. This shhh hell a wack 'cause the system set us up to for failure. They know that ain't no juvenile in they right mind is finna stay at some wack-ass groupie.

I'm hoping that my PO just let me stay here till I turn eighteen 'cause that's only around the corna in April. I just hope dat I would have neva bounced from the first groupie. That shhh was easy as fudge, but I AWOL too many times and got (T'eed). Damn mayne, I shoulda just stuck to that shhh.

It's all good dough, 'cause God got better plans for me. As long as I stay faithful to him, God will come through for me in the best way. I'm just tryin' to get out of the system, keep my rap sheet clean, and get myself a job and help my fam.

-Money Hungry

From The Beat: Of course you might fail at another group home. But "might fail" is just the other side of "might succeed." Why not go wherever you go with the attitude that you will make it, that you will gain some knowledge that you don't yet have, that you will learn to do things in a different and more positive way. The difference between success and failure may be nothing more than the attitude you bring to whatever situation you face. If turning 18 is just around the corner for you, then it's really time to start thinking like an adult. That means facing your responsibilities and doing your best to meet them, even when they are disagreeable to you. Children run. Adults stick it out. Your plans to get out, get a job and help your fam tell us that you are growing up. Don't screw that up by falling back on the ways that little boys handle their problems.

My Life And The Conditions I Am In

Right now I see things s whole 'nother way. Ninjas on the streets ain't real no mo'. Most ninjas is snitchin' nowadays. This shhh ain't right. I had a change in my eye since I been incarcerated that every ninja you see ain't real or about shhh.

My conditions in this shhh will make the hardest ninja go straight because everybody came to the game a different way. Life is too good to die young, but I'm going bang out till I get out, and when I get out that when I check out. And that's a long time from now.

Don't let this jail shhh be a life. For all my real, get at and on y'all feet had get this shhh poppin'. I love my ninjas till the day I die ya heard.

-Tb

From The Beat: Well, thanks for setting us straight. We had thought that great thinkers and great doers like Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, Langston Hughes, W.E.B. DuBois — and even Barack Obama and Condoleezza Rice — were truly something! But now we see that they're nothing and you and your boys are the real thing!

I Speak My Mind

What's up Beat? This Gucci Mane, and to me communication is important because it is how you and another person get along. That is how communication is important.

I have never been in that situation when someone said talk is dead and I could say something, because when talk is dead it's dead in the halls. Yes, I did wish to say something when they told me not to, and I did say something to my parents, to my principal and teacher. I am the kind of person to speak my mind.

-Gucci Mane

From The Beat: We admire people who can speak their minds, but we also know there are times when even you have to bite your tongue when you wish you could say something. For example, we know you're smart not to talk back to a judge who has power over your life. So, how do you feel at those times?

Love

Love can be expressed in so many ways

It's an amazing feeling

And once you found that special someone

You think about that person day after day

Being with him makes you so happy

And him telling you he loves you constantly

It's hard to be away from your other half

Because it's hard to find someone that makes you smile

Makes you laugh

Makes you feel wanted

That truly cares

And completes you

-Muñeca

From The Beat: Yes, love does fill you with the feeling you describe, especially when it is new and wonderful. On the other hand, we think you are already complete as you are. The problem with thinking that someone else completes us is that if — for any reason — the relationship doesn't last, we suddenly feel incomplete, when in fact we have everything that makes us whole within us. We hope this one lasts.

When I Find That One

I'm lookin' for that one, but I really can't find her, who?

Throwin' up my 'hood every time I walk by

I need a shawdy that's gonna stick by my side

And put in work when it's time to ride.

When its time to get money, put on your game face.

When we get that nice house money, goin' all over the place.

I need a shawdy that's willing to take care of me.

I'ma take care of you, so do the same for me.

I stay fitted every day, plus the diamonds in my teeth.

I do bad things 'cause I'm addicted to these streets.

With you on my side, we are goin' to run these streets.

We gone be riding on them dubs and females gone hate on you.

If they take it to a new level, I'ma slide that weapon to you.

It ain't never been a problem 'cause I stay in that gangsta shhh.

When I find you, be ready for me 'cause we gone be with it.

You my shawdy and you know that.

Don't worry, shawdy, come with me and our relationship will be on the map.

-Kb

From The Beat: If you find a girl who answers this call/You'll have to ride fast, 'cause you're both gonna fall/Course, you don't believe we know what we're sayin'/But the prisons are stuffed with those who were playin'/The females they run with are all in their mind/Cause when they look for relief, it's just other males they find/They all thought they'd be on the map to stay/And they are — from San Quentin to Pelican Bay!

Complainin'

This Anto giving it to you raw and uncut! I'm complaining because being in here is stressful as hell. Basically, I'm mad because it's modern-day slavery! I'm complaining because phony-ass people do wrong to you and then smile in yo' face like it's sweet!

I'm complainin' because ninjas play with guns on the outs, but when you step to them in here and they don't got their guns, they soft as cotton! I'm complainin' about people popping at the mouth, talking about shhh they ain't about, until they catch it to the mouth!

I'm complainin'... Damn! Y'all know why I'm complainin'!

-Anto

From The Beat: Well, you've got a lot to complain about! We'd love for you to expand on your theme that guns make people believe they are strong even when they're "soft as cotton." On the other hand, maybe the fact that people don't react they way you think a "strong" person should (in here or out there) is not a sign of weakness, but of strength. Things to think about.

What's Up With The Beat

Yeah dis ya boy Drew man. I'm still up in here and we were looking at the topics. The topic "complainin'" caught my eye. I was thinking about all these people around me, and sometimes they need to just shut up. That goes for the kids, the staff, and all these people crying that don't need to be.

These people be cryin', talking 'bout they got 90 days in a group home and shhh. I just be feeling like slappin' some of these people.

The staff be up in here complainin' like they work hella hard all day. These staff be whining about nothing when all they got to do is push a button all day. The staff don't even have to serve our food. They just push the button to our door and have us serve the food.

These probations officers be whining, talking like ninjas did something bad. People be in here for AWOL and be getting sent up the river. Man, I been on probation for five years now, and they keep violating me on some cat shhh, so they be cryin' about nothing.

But I'm gonna try to do my time and go back to the block so I ain't got to deal with this shhh.

-Drew Ski

From The Beat: You sure do a lot of complaining about people who do a lot of complaining... What's up with that? If you think going back to the block will free you from all this, you need to open your eyes a little wider. Doing the same as what led you here before is a prescription for more of the same. Keep doing what you're doing and you'll have a lot more time to complain about the whiners, the complainers, the staff, the kids, the probation officers... everyone but yourself.

Love Story

Yeah Beat, this the Anto ninja, still in max keeping it solid like always! Love is a crazy thang! I'm dedicating this to the wife — love, at first sight.

I thought it was just puppy love, until I got locked up.

Now every day, I'm wishing I was out doing it nonstop,

or chilling with my girl, yeah, smoking on a chop...

Wit' a case like mine, all I ask for is love and support.

I couldn't imagine breaking her heart having her beg for child support,

And how good it feel when I see them dimples while she smiling, when I'm in court!

Yeah boo-thang, ya husband love ya!

-Anto

From The Beat: Was she there for you before you did what you did? To risk all of that... sounds just like a kid! If you get back to this love of your life/What will you change to hold onto your wife?

Let Me Go

Something that I complain about is getting out of this place. Something else is not being able to do what I want I want when I want to. I think that the judge should just let me go so I can just be with the fam bam. I would like to go home 'cause I think I did too much time, and it's time to let a young homie go

-Acie

From The Beat: But if the judge let you go home, and you messed up, what would all the other judges and lawyers and POs say to the judge that took that chance? Besides the time you have already done, tell us why the judge should take a chance on you? What changes do you plan to make so that you won't be facing any more judges?

What I Think About Love

In my eyes, the way I feel about love is... strong, respectful, loyal, honest, trust, responsibilities, honest, and caring. I think love is taking care of another person and you care about and respect. And you both know you guys want to spend the rest of your lives with them.

-Chris

From The Beat: What about taking care of yourself so that you're in a position to take care of someone else? If you love someone, can you continue to do the things that separate you from the one(s) you love, or do the things you do to take you away mean more to you than they do?

Rescue Me

I feel I've given up on life.
I've been messed with, heartbroken,
Stepped on, and lied to.

I really feel like I don't know what to do.
I'm locked up and I've lost my sense of control.
Just hope I get on a right role.

-Ashley

From the Beat: We hope you get on that right role, too, Ashley. There's no question that you've lost control while in here. Everyone here is under the control of a system that can't care about you as much as you must care about yourself. Use this time to think about how you lost control of your life on the outs, so that you will know what steps to take to regain that control, and never give it up again.

He Took A Bullet For Me

What's good wit' tha Beat? Dis dat ninja Na-Na an' I'm 'bout to talk about when my big homie rescued me. We was on the block an' them ninjas slid through. They start doin' they thang, and we start doin our thang. I almost got hit, but tha big homie took one for lil' bra. Ah love bra for that ... Ah always show bra love fa dat. He ma favorite big homie. We always together. Dat's like ma role model.

-Na-Na

From The Beat: It sounds like your role model came very close to being no one's role model, just another dead and forgotten little boy. We wish you could see and appreciate how much bigger the world is than your tiny little square block of reality. But nobody can make anybody else grow. That comes from within. All we can do is hope...

Where You At?

We in JJC, nothing to do. We all waiting to get out, be with our family, but stuck in this hellhole. They tell you what to do an' you have no control over nothing. Gotta watch every corner in eyesight. If you don't, you'll be trapped around somebody you beefin' wit', so watch ya back. Don't trust nobody you don't know. I'm out.

-Quan

From The Beat: Well, you've described life inside this juvenile jail. But what about life outside? If you don't like it here, why are you doing the things that lead you here? Maybe you shouldn't even trust yourself if you can't rely on yourself to stay free.

Life

When I was wit' my family, I used to have good times. When I used to play with my little nephews an' my little brother and little sisters, I used to have fun. I used to play P.S. 2, and my nephew used to win, and basketball. My sisters and I would play fighting games — pro girl boxing, and sometimes my sister will win. Me, my nephew and brother used to ride dirt bikes with my uncle.

-Marquez

From The Beat: Why would you give up all that fun to hand your life over to a bunch of strangers in a place where fun is hard to find? Think twice next time when you're tempted to do the things that take you away from your family and your fun.

My Complaint

I complain about being in the Juvenile Justice Center because I'm in here for something I did not do. I hope I can go home because I was just at the wrong time and wrong place, so they got me.

-John

From The Beat: The system makes mistakes, like all of us. We hope that this mistake gets rectified. Maybe the lesson you should take from this is, don't be in the wrong place with the wrong people at the wrong time...

On The Outs

Man, when I get out, the first thing I'm going to do is going to hug my mom real hard and tell her I love her. And I'm going to smoke some weed with my bro. And play with my little bro.

-Fat Pat

From The Beat: Okay, then tell us what the second and third thing you're going to do. Even more important, tell us what you're NOT going to do, so that you can avoid coming back to this place.

Lock-Up Saved Me

Sometime I think it's good that me and ma lil' sis are locked up. Why? Because since I been locked up, ma people have been getting shot. Knowing me, I would have been at them places at them times with them. If I was not locked up, I would either be dead or killed someone.

-Mercedes

From The Beat: Well, Mercedes, if being locked up has kept you alive, or kept someone else alive that you might have killed, then we're glad you're here. But you won't be locked up forever. So, how will you avoid the terrible fates you worry about once you're back out on the streets. The time to think about this problem is now, while you have the time and freedom to think. Don't waste that opportunity.

Poem Or Rap

What's good wit' da Beat, like I never left
I'm room up all night, I ain't never slept
Dis for dem cats on DRB
Up in unit 4, 6, 7, 2 or 3
Staff on my jock; leave me alone, dog
Only give da kid three-minute phone calls
And no gym time.
Gettin' kick out of class every day
So I'm walking a thin line
No medical, I got the best of health
Through The Beat Within is how I express myself
And da young dude strike like a panther
I know the answer

-Lil' Pes

From The Beat: Well, if you know the answer, you know more than all the great thinkers of the world who have spent their lives trying to find "the answer." Since you know, don't keep it to yourself. Tell! Tell!

Can't Be Rescued

Born a thoroughbred, so I know how to eat.
I will never say I need some rescuing 'cause I was raised
on these streets

Stayin' true to the game, I'm always holdin' my own.
Even though at times hurts to hear my mom sayin',
"Mijo, come home..."

Strivin' my whole life, it's no wonder this system can't
break me.

So the only hope for me they said would be best held up
in Tracy.

Tomorrow ain't promised to me so I try to find some way
of change

But I don't seem to find one because these streets keep
calling my name.

So now you could say I'm living to die.

'Cause I ain't beggin' for my life an' you can tell that
ain't no lie.

-Chimy

From The Beat: Even though we believe that you are very sincere in your determination that you won't change, we are just as sincere when we see you can't know the future. Change will come. The only question is, will you make it or will it be forced on you? When your mother's tears hurt you as much as they hurt her, you will suddenly see the true treasure you are walking away from. We hope that happens while you can still do something about it.

I Love

Baby you know I love you to the fullest of my extent
and I will never quit.

Your love is like a sickness, with no cure, like a love
cancer.

I love you girl, and there is no other answer.

Thinking about the things that we can do, things only
involving me and you.

Thinking about where we can go, where we can talk.

Thinking about you makes my heart stop.

And for a split second I thought I was able.

Who would have thought that I'd find an angel...

an angel for me, the one who completes me,
the one who filled the empty spaces that was up in me.
It's crazy, I never would have dreamed this girl would be
on my side and on my team.

I love her.

-Big Keno

From The Beat: We hope you can find a way to send her your poem. Is she as smitten as you?

In Love With Two Girls

I'm in love with two girls and their sisters. The older one
wants me back and the younger one just wants to go out
for one year and have sex. She just likes messing with
hella guys.

But the older one wants a long relationship. I've been
with the both of them. I talk on the phone with the both
of them. But the older one gets mad when I talk to her
sister. But 9'll see what happens when I get out.

The older sister wants me back and she wants to have
my kid. She moves hella quick. But I guess you can't stop
or slow down love. But I love the both of them. That's just
how I feel about 'em.

-St. New

From The Beat: We can't tell you what to do, but we can say that girls who tie their futures to boys who are locked up aren't ready to be mothers! And boys who allow themselves to be controlled by a cold system instead of remaining free with those they love are not ready to be fathers! Whatever you do, we urge you not to bring another child into this world until you are a responsible man. Work on that!

Natural High

My natural high is being with my Lady.

She gets yo boy going.

Every time I kiss her it's like an addiction I can't get
enough of it.

-In love

From The Beat: What a nice addiction to have! What is it about your Lady that "gets you going"?

Love Stories

'S'up e'reybody? Hope everyone I doing ok. Well...

One of the topics caught my attention. I got love for
a lot of people. But I think I'm losin' the love I got for my
ex-girlfriend, which I don't want to.

I remember when I was sprung off this girl. She felt
the same way about me, too. But I messed it up for myself.
I started flirtin' with one of her friends, and one thing led
to another. One of my patnas knew about me and my girl,
but he also knew I was getting' at her friend. He asked
me if he could holla at my girl, and I said it was coo' with
me. But he hated on me and told her I was talkin' to her
friend.

Well, they started talkin' and I was hella mad and
broken-hearted. Guess you neva know what you got 'til
you lose it. Now I'm tryna get back with her. When all this
happened, we were in 8th grade. Now I'm 18 years old and
we still talk. I really like her, and the fact that she is in
college now turns me on hella much.

I'm on my way to doing something, though. We gone
be all right.

-Yung Tone

From The Beat: You're right, too many of us don't know what we have until we lose it. We hope you get back what you had, but we also hope you know that your anger at her friend is misdirected. It's you who hated on yourself by not respecting the treasure you had. That's a hard lesson to learn, but it's such an important one in so many circumstances.

Mental Health, A State Of Mind

Mental health is a state of mind. That's what I think.
If you have no worries then your mental health is good.
If you are stressing then your mental health is probably
bad. You might try to kill yourself or go into a state of
depression. But if you control what you think then your
state of mind (aka mental health) should be good and
stress-free.

-C

From The Beat: Sometimes we underestimate how much control we have over ourselves. Life can throw so much at us that we often time feel that our emotions and reactions to others are out of our hands. Keep up the positive attitude C.

Locked Up

It sucks begin locked up again. I had a lot of stuff
going for me. I had a lot of good things on the outs and
I was having fun, too. I got locked up for my homies and
sometimes it sucks. I got locked up while my friends got
to go home. It's all good though, because my boys are
my boys. But a counselor told me that life has its ways -
getting out and in is like a circle of life. You get out until
you make a change and stay out.

I'm 17 years old and 18 is not that far away? But I got
to go. And, oh yeah, I would like to make shout outs to
the boys doing time. Much love to my friends.

-Vietfoo'

From The Beat: That's a good way to look at life in general, that it goes in certain cycles. But how can we break that cycle? How can you break that cycle yourself?

Beat Within Interview With Justin

TBW: What's up?

J: Nothin', just chillin'.

TBW: How long you been here?

J: Five months.

TBW: You been charged yet?

J: Yes

TBW: Adult or juvenile?

J: Juvenile

TBW: Lookin' at ranch or the Y, or goin' home or a group home?

J: CYA alternative.

TBW: How long will you be there?

J: One year.

TBW: When you heard that, was it good news or bad news?

J: Both.

TBW: What was good about it?

J: That I'm leaving the halls.

TBW: Yeah, this place gets old. What's the bad part?

J: That I'm getting out in a year.

TBW: Who do you miss the most on the outs?

J: Sisters and cousins, and two girls I talk to.

TBW: Who are the two girls?

J: Just some girls I hella talk to when I'm hella mad at my family.

TBW: Yeah, I know what you mean. I have friends like that. Did you know them before getting here?

J: Yes I did. I knew them for about two years.

TBW: Some of my best friends are guys. As a girl it's sometimes easier to talk to guys than girls. Do you think there's a difference between friends who are girls and friends who are boys?

J: Yes.

TBW: I think we need both kinds of friends. They give us different things at different times. Why do think you get along so well with them?

J: Because we're friends with benefits.

-Justin

From The Beat: Although Beat interviews are okay, we really want you to write what is on your mind, and not what is on the mind of The Beat... Next time, give us something out of your own head. Thanks.

Depression

Last time I wrote in The Beat it was about my girlfriend getting released. So yeah let me tell you the outcome. So she had court January 28, 2008. Well she didn't get her early release she had to stay in the hall until her regular release date which is April 28, 2008. This week was messed up. First my best friend got released, I'm happy for her but I don't have her with me anymore. Then my cousin, and my other best friend left to the ranch.

So then it was me and my girl, and my two patnas. So on Wednesday the both my girl got failed because someone told on her for something she did that wasn't even serious. So she came to my room and told me she was getting failed and the look on her face made tears run down my face. Then she walked away and got into a tangle with staff and she got restrained, and I saw it all.

Now its me and my two patnas and we keeping it solid up in here.

Well I'm out and I am very depressed.

-Lil' S

From The Beat: Sounds to us like surrounding yourself with friends is more important than doing a good program. We appreciate the update, but in truth, if you could only focus on you, you would have such an easier time doing your program and possibly you wouldn't be depressed either. Best to you with the next chapter!

Love Stories

My topic is love story. I was with this one girl named G. I was with her for a while. I was starting to love her but I guess someone told her that I was cheating on her. That wasn't true. I told her hella times, but she didn't believe me. But it's right - beezees come and go. I started talking to this one girl name A. She's cool. She's into me I was just about to get with her, but I got locked up a couple of days after talking with her.

My pops be telling me she calls for me, but he told her I was locked up. I got court soon. I wanna get out before Valentines Day. She could be my valentine. Well yeah Beat, that's all. I hope Angelica's mine at the end of life, Beat...

-Juan

From The Beat: Not so fast Juan. Get to know her, slowly. It's best to be patient in matters of the heart. If you think you'd like to be with her for a long time, then there's no hurry.

Help On The Way

There was this time when I was walking to my aunt's pad. As I was close to getting to the apartment, I seen a car full of guys I didn't get along with. They jumped out the car and began to run towards me. I was walking fast when I saw that I was cornered and couldn't go anywhere.

But for some strange reason, I looked behind me, and the guys were no longer behind me. I thought that was odd. So I began to walk back to my aunt's house when I seen another group of guys I didn't get along with. You can say it wasn't my day.

This time I was like, "Screw it," and stayed put. As they walked to me, they just started saying I was on the wrong side of town. I ignored them and kept walking. I seen them behind me. I knew they were trying to pull a quick one, so I got on my cell phone and called some homies. Luckily, they were close by, picked me up and went to where I got stopped by those taggers.

We jumped out the car. They were on a corner house five deep and we walked towards them. One of my little homies started telling them to let's go five on five at a park nearby, but they didn't want to go, so the little homie cracked one of them and we jumped towards them. But the four of them said to let it go one on one. While this was happening, my little homie was smashing on a tagger. After all this, we hopped and left to chill. So all this, who says homeboys aren't there for you?

-Lefty

From The Beat: You know, Lefty, we were feeling your side of things at the beginning of this piece — the outrage of little boys telling you where you could and could not walk. But you flipped the script on us, and by the end, you lost our sympathy by jumping some taggers who clearly did not want to beef. In our minds, that put you in the same category as those little boys. If you keep putting yourself in the hands of the law, if you keep thinking your freedom is unimportant, you will end up in a place where it won't matter if your homeboys are there for you or not...

Doctor

I went to the hospital for a separated shoulder and I had road rash and I insisted that they didn't scrub the dirt and rocks out of my road rash. They said OK and told me to lay down so I did, then they scrubbed it. It hurt so bad now I hate going there.

-Stark

From The Beat: Damn that must have stung! The docs could have done better than lie to your face, but remember, some pain up front is better than an amputated arm down the road. In the meantime, do your best to stay on your vehicle.

Dear Beat

I just get really get depressed for so long,
that lacks of emotions makes happiness and sadness
go straight to anger.

But no matter how low I go,
I never find my way back up emotionally.
And that's why I get high.

-Richmond

From The Beat: And what does being high do for you? Does it make you forget about your depression and your anger, or does it supply the emotions you've been lacking. Perhaps finding your way back up starts with trying to stay present, which is very hard when you are sad. But the fact that you know yourself and know why you get high, that's a great start.

Group Home

What's good with The Beat? This ya boy Packman, back from the group home. I cut out because the group home was whack. I was only there for a minute, then I got caught on the block. The cop ran my name and I came up as I missing person with a warrant. I'm just trying to get out the system but instead I'm locked up and can't do anything about it.

-Packman

From The Beat: You must know that you can't get out of the system by running from group homes and not completing programs. What you can do about it is just put your head down, finish your time and then be free.

Riches

Every time I try, it seems like my game goes back
Try to make it through this hectic life in the dark with
my window cracked

When I sit back, reminisce about ol' times
It seems like rappin' and sellin' dope was a goldmine
You can say that I developed a cold mind

My heart was never there,
The Oakland life it wasn't fair
Had to fend for myself from the rain to summertime
Since I was young, I was addicted to the grind
Money was the only thing I understood
Trying to get it whether it was bad or good
I'm from the 'hood where we will rob you for riches
And rats get stitches
But I will be sittin' in the dark counting my riches

-Young Cash

From The Beat: All we can hope, Young Cash, is that you open your eyes and truly see the dark! The riches you're counting are all going into the pockets of your keepers — the lawyers, DAs, POs, judges, counselors, jailers of all kinds. They are grateful to you for those riches you think you're counting. In the Bible (1 Cor. xiii. 11) it says: "When I was a child I spoke as a child I understood as a child I thought as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things." It's time to put away childish things.

Rescued You

What it do, Beat? I'm gonna talk about when I saved my homies from getting caught up. He crashed, I got caught and took to jail — so, now I'm waiting for court and I hope I get out with life skills not the ranch, just because I got caught and took to jail. Now, I learned my lesson of not getting caught and not to drink, just in case the judge sees this. Ha-ha!

Just kidding.

-Pink

From The Beat: We wish you would have shared more of the story of what happened the night you got caught up. Did you tell your homie to run and you saved him, or were you just the one that got caught and didn't give up his name? Either way, it takes a lot of courage to protect your friends — but how do you know they would do the same for you?

No Love

G-onda Beat? To tell you the truth, I really don't have any love stories to tell you because I never been in love, pues esaodo por ara alrato.

-Tyronwny

From The Beat: You have many lifetimes to fall in love, we wish for you to find love soon.

Hate In My Eyes

I came back wit' hate in my eyes
lil' did you know that this boss was gonna rise
I came back wit' hate in my eyes
showin' no emotion but cryin' on the inside

I came back wit' hate in my eyes
here to settle all the hate that made millions cry
that made good presidents die
that made you and I
Naw this ain't a test of yo' unity
It's me exposin' the cruelty
that made a community
Want to sit there and puke on me

They want to make speeches 'bout stoppin' the violence
but when a boy gets popped in the 'hood all you hear is
silence

That's pretty much how it goes, ain't nothin' else in life
but young brothers killin' each other wit' guns and
knives

So look in my face and tell me when it's all gonna stop
didn't y'all learn a damn thang when it happened to
2-Pac?

It's sad we live in a world that'll kill a great man
Just 'cause when the world corrupt he the first to stand.

-D-Mani

From The Beat: City officials often cite the increase in violence as a reason to hire more police officers. What good does that do when all this violence has more to do with poverty and social injustice? What can we do as community members to give a voice to all those lost on the street. How can we make them heard, to make a positive change?

I Miss The Homies

What's good. This is Barbie and I just wanted to say a few things. First, I just want to say I miss my homegirl and I want her to come up to this unit asap, and also I want to tell her I have an OT soon, and I'm so tempted to run because the streets keep calling me, but I'm not going to. So - you better not run either.

-Barbie

From The Beat: Hey, this is your opportunity to communicate with hundreds of folks. So please, write something for all of us, not just a few of us. We appreciate that you will resist the temptation to run on the 4th. That's wise.

Drugs

I think that drugs should be legal. I don't agree with people using all drugs, but I believe that if people want to ruin their lives, let them. I believe weed is not a bad drug. I'm not tryin' to say everyone should smoke it or that it's good for everyone but it should be the individual's choice.

-Choice Is Yours

From The Beat: Legalizing marijuana is one of the most debated topics around the country. You make a good point about personal responsibility lying with the individual rather than the government. However, is it possible that one person's drug abuse can lead to consequences for other people? Maybe there should only be penalties for drug use if they lead to harming others. Hit us back with a response.

Words Alone Mean Nothing

Complaining is fine, so long as it provokes action. Talk without action is dead talk. I've heard so many people tell me that they want to change their lives for the better, as soon as... (insert any one of millions of excuses here).

But really, there is no perfect moment to change except right now. If you wait, you may wait forever. So yes, go ahead and complain, but remember: words alone mean nothing.

-Monk, Santa Clara

From The Beat: There is not one word in this fine piece that we can disagree with. Sometimes words mean something. These words you've written, for example.

Mental Health Evaluation

Q-vo Beat? Well, I think that evaluation for mental health is unnecessary. If a person can function without incident in his/her daily life then there is no reason he/she should be evaluated.

Anything else they try to do is just to judge people. They want to have us like animals and classify us, but I ain't with that, ya dig? They need to let people be and stop trying to control our lives. They too concentrated on small stuff and missed the big picture.

Stuff like that crazy kid at Virginia Tech. They overlook the people that really need help and let time bomb's run loose and have incidents like Virginia Tech and Columbine.

-Shotgun

From The Beat: Mental disorders are difficult to diagnose. Unlike a physical disease, there is no certain way to test for them. It's true that mental health professionals often get it wrong, but does that mean they shouldn't try? If these professionals are missing the "big picture", what signs should they be looking for instead?

Love Stories

A memory of love with my ex-girlfriend: It was love at first sight. One morning, it was the first day of school, I was walking to class and saw this beautiful girl. Once I laid my eyes on her on her, she turned around and looked into my eyes. I was kind of shy but we both said hi. I asked her name she said: Justine, and I told her my name. We sat right next to each other and we began to talk about being in a relationship. It was my game - that's why I sat next to her. I think it was my looks that got her.

-Playboy

From The Beat: It is nice that you still remember this moment with your ex-girl so nicely. Oftentimes, people will let the way a relationship ended with someone color their memories. It sounds like you jumped into things quick with this girl.

Potential

Well Beat, hate to break it to you but these topics didn't really appeal to me, sorry.

I will write about something that people should do is stop putting the image of something they are not. Most of these inmates have far more than what they tend to show to people and that always tends to corrupt the minds of our youth. Most of the guys have potential to become more than they show. And it hurts when I see these guys in here.

-B

From The Beat: In any new situation, it can be easier to pretend to fit in than to show strangers who you really are. To all those who feel this way, "B" is right. Don't forget all your gifts and potential. It's easy to lose sight of these qualities in your current situation, but don't let your current situation corrupt what's best in you.

Vanessa, Me, and Lacey... I Love Them

Well, there was these two times where I met these two girls - both at the Great Mall in Milpitas - but at separate times.

Well, let me tell you how I met Vanessa. I met her at the buses because I was at the Light Rail, and I saw her walking. So I walked down stairs and she stopped me and I got her number and we got hooked up together and I fell in love with her. That's how I met Vanessa, then she got pregnant.

I met Lacey at McDonald's. She and her homegirls stopped me because they said I had beautiful eyes. And so she gave me her number and then the next day I got locked up, because I was on the run. I ran from my program, but I still got her number.

Then I met a girl named Brenda and I got her address too, and she writes me. Well, got to go Beat. Late.

-Chris

From The Beat: Chris, you have some serious business to take care of, with Vanessa, don't you. Bringing a new life into the world is about as serious as it gets. And you can't do the right thing, whatever that turns out to be, while you're locked up. Get your act together, man. You have some heavy duty responsibilities to deal with. And number one is to take care of your own problems. You can't help others until you've dealt with your own difficult situation. If we understand your piece, you have a child waiting to be born. Time to get real, as scary as it must feel. Once you've committed to doing what's right, you'll feel a lot better about your life. We're not saying you have to be with the mother of your child. We're saying that you have to find a way to help her, and your child. That's what being a man is about.

Love Stories

I once was in love with a very special person. She was eight years older than me, which meant that I had someone very smart and up on game.

I was with her for two years. I opened my heart and let her touch me the way no other women were able to touch me. In my heart, we were good together and I let her live with me for a while until we got our own place.

I thought everything was good because I took care of her and got her anything she wanted, but I was wrong. Once I got locked up she stayed loyal for about two months, until I found out she cheated on me. I figured that out once she stopped writing me. I got over it after a while, but now it's hard for me to let another girl into my life and heart. So, now I just keep friends with benefits.

-Larry

From The Beat: Eight years older is a pretty big age gap between a young man and a woman, but you say that you took care of her. Being hurt makes the heart close up, but you will probably find true love again if you are open.

Love Ain't Shhh

What's up Beat. It's the Lil' One just here waiting to get out. Only got a few more days and I'm out of here for good. I ain't coming back I know for sure.

Well, I'm sick and tired of these guys now days. They're phony.

There's no such thing as love, and now I know I only need myself through thick and thin. I need no help.

You always said that you'll be by my side but now I know you lied. The feelings I had for you were strong but now I know its time to move on, focus in school, and be a success. Life is too short for regrets.

Well - to those doing hella time - be coo'. Much love and respect.

-Lil One

From The Beat: You're wrong about love, though. It exists, and it's good stuff. You haven't found the right partner. Be patient and careful. There are plenty of good folks out there. Don't rush it.

I Hate

I hate!
I hate this food.
I hate!
I hate the clothes here.
I hate!
I hate this place and it almost makes me hate my life,
almost.

-Ags

From The Beat: Don't get carried away, now. We're glad you don't hate us, because we like you.

Love Itis

Roses are red, violets are blue.
I'm so deeply in love
and so could be you.

Well, what's up Beat. One thing I can say is that I'm in love with my boyfriend. He's my everything. We have a great relationship. We respect each other and understand each other. Unfortunately, not all relationships are great. Well, good luck with love, Beaters! Be coo'.

-Melo's Girl

From The Beat: Who could disagree with you on this. We're glad you're pleased with your relationship.

The Love Stories

Well, I'm still in love with my baby mama. I stopped talking to her when I got out in 2005. She was pregnant and I thought it was with her ex-boyfriend. To really find out if it was mine, I got a blood test done and found out it was mine, so now I'm back with her and still in love with her. Well, I don't have anything else to say so I'm gone. I'll end with love and respect.

-Joker

From The Beat: Sometimes when we mistrust someone and then realize we were wrong, our relationship is even stronger. We wish you luck with life and love.

My Love Story

What's up Beat. Well, my love story starts with me kicking it with my brother Brownny. We were at his house. I called my man Lucky. he told me that he was coming to San Jose from Central Valley - Modesto. I was kind of scared to see him because I hadn't seen him in a long time and I was being really shy.

He got to my brothers house with these other guys. My man's friends wanted to leave but he wanted to stay with me and my brother. He told his friends to come back later to pick him up. So his friends said to call them when he wanted to go back to Modesto. They left and my brother went walking to Mike's Pizza. So I stayed at my brother's house with my man.

We started walking around the hood. We were holding hands and just talking about a lot of different things. Then we walked by a house with a bush of roses and he cut one off and gave it to me. That was hella sweet. Then we got back to my brother's house and were sitting on his porch and talking when all of a sudden we see his friends drive by. Then they gave me a ride home and he left for home after, and we were talking while he was on his way home. Keep your head up.

-Payasa

From The Beat: Sounds like a pretty good beginning. A slow walk and good talk and a beautiful flower (though we must say that it isn't cool to take someone else's roses). Have you been in touch with your new/old friend since then?

Close Call

What's up Beat. It's me, Luis, still in here.

I'm going to write a story about when I almost died. It was years ago. It was at my house before I came here. I was in the garage. My brother came up behind me. We always play wrestling, like headlock or twisting our arms back, until one of us taps for 'out'. So, he came from behind me and put his arm around my neck. He was choking me. I couldn't breathe. He didn't know I tried to pull his arm out. I couldn't, so my heart stopped, and my breathing, and my eyes closed. I could hear nothing.

To be continued.....

-Luis

From The Beat: That's a scary story Luis. We're glad you made it through. We bet your brother felt pretty bad about the accident. We hope you've stopped playing that game. Sounds too dangerous, to us.

Thoughts From A First Timer

This is my first time being in here.
Never been locked up.

Never been in trouble with the law.
My first time here.

I'm alright now, but I'm waiting to hear what the Judge is going to say.
I messed up, and these are the consequences that I have to face.

I'm hoping to get house arrest, but if I have to go to the ranch, I'll do my time.

I messed up and I'm ready to take my punishment.

-Anthony

From The Beat: That's a very mature outlook for someone so young. Whatever the outcome, it must be reassuring that you'll be ready for anything. Keep your head up and hope that the legal system shows you the same respect that you have shown it.

Mental Health

I feel every man has their own brain, so no man should be judged the same. What I'm trying to say is sometimes men and women turn to drugs to feel something better than they feel. Drugs should be legalized and let the women and men mess up their own brains.

Alright then Beat, stay up.

-A Man Who Stays High as a Bird

From The Beat: Every person is unique and should be treated as such. Mental health evaluation needs to be objective and be treated on a case-by-case basis, staying as far ways from stereotyping as possible. With this in mind, do you believe there is a benefit to diagnosing and treating those who are truly ill? If people turn to drugs to feel better, is it possible that the reality of their situation needs to be dealt with rather than avoided?

Drama

Well, what's cracking? This is your homegirl Athina coming out of this unit. Well, today I'm going to talk about the drama in the unit - because there are different cliques starting drama with each other and its just all shhh talking. The girls say they gonna do this they gonna do that but I don't see no action. It's just all talk. They talk so much shhh but they don't back it up. And first of all, damn, they all lucky that they are here 'cause on the outs it's all different. You just get smash on, yup yup. Well, I'm out. Late.

-Athina

From The Beat: We suggest you don't let them get you in a tizzy. Spend your time learning and reading and having conversations with those who are mature enough to know how to use their time constructively - that would be folks like you.

Complaining

Well, I am complaining about me being in juvenile hall. I think that we were tricked and lied to and disrespected.

My sister got into a fight with a gang banger. I pulled the hyna off my sister then she pulled out a knife and the janitor grabbed her and she threw the knife.

Me and my sister got picked up by my mom because we did not want to go to Barnes – the principal – because he don't and never liked me or my sister.

Next morning, the principal called saying for us to come down to the principles office just to talk and get our side of the story, but when we got there they arrested us and the cops disrespected my mom and had no sympathy for her. The two principals lied and said we would go to juvenile for most likely just a day and go home. One of the principals also said that the other girl would get arrested but all she got was a slap on the hand. I think that this whole situation is unfair to me, my sister, and my mom.

-Grumpy

From The Beat: We appreciated that both you and your sister participated in The Beat Within while you were in the hall. It is really interesting to hear the story from both of you. Hopefully, you managed to work things out somehow.

Super Bowl

When Brady takes the field
the Giants will fold and soon yield

Moss will take off deep

Three Giants on his heels

And the ball will fly from Brady's hand

Two feet in the zone Moss'll land

That's six fo' the Pats

An' another six will follow fast

'Till Eli Manning will start to get mad

Wishing he was the favorite son of his dad

But all that's too bad

'Cause the Pats scored two point in his pads

Now he wipin' the green off his ass

See why the Pats are better

And I'll write you another letter

-Old Man Time

From the Beat: The saying "hindsight is 20/20" just seems to fit here doesn't it? The Pats in all their glory, couldn't finish the ultimate story. The Giants came to the desert, their defense on alert. And for all his zigs and zags and touchdown grabs, Moss had little else to show. Our heart goes out to all you Pats fans!

A Sad Love Song

What's up Beat? Today I'm gonna write about love.

Love is something I used to have

I was so deep in it I was about to be a dad

But then it all went wrong

Now I'm writing this sad love song

I was gonna have a baby

But then I broke up with my lady,

We used to talk about our marriage

But then my girl had a miscarriage

When I heard about it I just went crazy

'Cause I lost my future baby

Well that's all I got to say

Some facts for love

Just don't mess around with love cause its something serious.

-Corky

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear about you and your girl and her miscarriage. Things happen in life for a reason. It's nobody's fault. There are some things that are just beyond your control. Love is a good thing but that doesn't mean that you're gonna find it right away. You live and you learn.

The Beat Within

What up Beat, it your homeboy Nino coming from Sunnyvale. So how you guys holding up. Well my ex lady is the best girl. She is always there for me. She always writing me all the time I am locked up. And she tells me to go to school and I do. And she calls me all the time. We always kick it on the outs. She lives around the corner and I kick it. I love her.

-Niño

From The Beat: How are you holding up? You should be going to school and staying out of trouble. We hope that that girl you talking about can keep you out of trouble when you return home.

Complaining

I don't deserve to be in juvenile. These are bigger problems in the world, other than something that could have been solved without me being here. This is not fair for me and my sister to have to be locked up because of what that girl said.

They gave her a chance to talk and to have a witness talk for her but me and my sister didn't get that chance. We were able to talk but it wasn't worth helping because we still ended up here. It went through one ear and out thee other as the pig laughed and ridiculed us. He was disrespectful and rude about the situation. He should have spoke to me, my mom and my sister like human beings, not animals.

Plus we never got a chance to have a witness, they said we don't have any but we told them we do and they don't want to hear it. Unfair justice!

They gave the wet back a chance to say what she had to say and let her witness speak but not me and my sister. They took her side and felt sorry for her. She is just jealous of me and my sister and wanted to make up lies. We have graduation to lose, she's a freshman so she had nothing to worry about. She deserves to be in here, not my sister and me!!!

-Angel Baby

From The Beat: You and your sister are both really defensive and talk about injustice, but the way you are badmouthing the girl you got into a fight with makes it seem like you would want to beef with her again when you got out. Perhaps, you should try to let your anger go before it gets you in trouble again.

Love Stories

I got a girl that I put in a messed up situation. She just got out of Elmwood, and now she's back in 'cause of me. Me and her were at the wrong place at the wrong time and now we facing the consequences. I just want to apologize, 'cause I know she shouldn't be in jail but I do wanna say I love her. Baby, I do and when it's all over, I'm coming home to you. So yeah, I love you suga lips.

-Yung Sha T

From The Beat: Getting someone you care about in trouble is really hard, but it sounds like you two have a strong relationship so hopefully she'll understand.

Complain

Q-vo Beat? This is vato again talking about complaining. I'm complaining because you guys always changing my shhh. Q-vo with that Beat? How you go from vato to ninja? That's all I have to complain about.

-Lil' Psycho

From The Beat: What can we say Lil' Psycho, we're speechless. We try to stay true to your writings, but help us in the future by being more specific about all these changes. If things are changing, is that necessarily a bad thing?

Love In My Life – My Addiction To Cigarettes

Some people think they love someone but they really don't, but that ain't me. I know I love someone when I would do next to anything for that person. There's one person in my life that I'm in love with. Her name is Kailin. I know I'm in love with her because I'm always there for her and we are always together.

When I'm locked up it breaks my heart because I know she wants to be with me but she can't. She doesn't even know that I'm in here and she's wondering where I am. I can't get a hold of her because she doesn't have a house phone. Before I got in here I used to smoke stoges everyday.

Some of my friends say I should stop smoking. Others say, need a light? When I smoke it makes me feel good and when I'm in here it make me crazy because there's no way to get them. When I'm in here I don't feel the same as I do on the outs. It sucks but I got to deal with it.

- Pothead

From The Beat: Smoking is bad for your health. It is proven that smoking causes lung cancer. So if you're planning on living a long life you might want to think about quitting. Also if you're planning on trying to be with that girl you love, you need to stay out of jail. You need to find a healthier addiction.

Want To Go home

I don't know what to say on these topics, so I'm just going to write how I feel. I just had court and didn't go home. My P.O. recommended Ranch. Now, I'm just waiting for APA. and JTC to come interview me.

Man, just want to go home. I miss my family and my ninjas

-Tamara

From The Beat: Don't be down though, you seem like you are doing well in here and keeping your head up and doing good. You'll be out soon and seem like you are ready to turn your life around.

My Talk With The Devil

Me: Hello, I'm going to do it dog. I'm tired but I want to let you know what's on my mind before I fire a.

Devil: Hey homie what you tripping on?

Me: That's it dog I'm through I'm not fit to take this shh this is all that I can do.

Devil: A homie you all right dog?

Me: I'm sick of all this pedo.(problems)

Devil: Don't do nothing stupid.

Me: I love you homie. I lived that firme life que no(right?) I kick it like I had to you always had you.

Devil: Why you cocking back your cuete(gun) this ain't cool homie, your tripping homie Don't do this freaking jale(job).

Me: It's hard for me to do this dog. To think of my familia, my lil homies, my lil carnalita but the truth is I'm a burden, I no longer want to suffer forget the world and forget my life, I am sick of all this. I realize that if there were ever a God, He never look into my eyes dog. All I needed a jefe(dad) to control me. Tell my hyna that I love her. Don't tell her I was crying. Make her think I wasn't tripping even though she know your lying. Tell my parents that I'm sorry for all the pain and sorrow they won't see me back tomorrow. Pues sabes que(Well you know what) I'm finished talking.

-Moska

From The Beat: Wow what a conversation with the devil. We know this is not how you're feeling, given we spoke to you. Yet on paper you're willing to leave your girl and family that love you a lot? We know in real life that situations can get stressful, and you want to find quick solutions to your problems. But remember you can you talk to those who love you! You can always talk to us.

Communicate

Communication is important and crucial for youth. To communicate is key to life and to some or even most I have been known to talk or chatter a little too much. That's understandable because I know I talk a lot and that's cool but if you were to actually come up to me and ask me something, I would listen and give the truth.

Growing up all I heard was lies and I told myself that I would not grow up to mislead people and I ain't done it since. So with that said, I decided to stay talking and if you don't like it then do something about it. Please.

-Brian

From The Beat: Speaking out too loudly can be dangerous, but it also comes with self-confidence. Continue to further the truth, whatever it may be for you Brian, but be careful not too cross too far over that line.

My Purpose?

Why am I in this place when I could be at home? Why does it seem like the world is trying to separate me from my family? I try to do the best I can by providing for my son and mom. But yet everyday that goes by I feel like as if I've taken five steps forward and ten steps back. I love my baby's daddy with all my heart, but yet I don't understand how I can love someone who can't seem to love me back. Each day that goes by, I can't seem to think about anyone else.

Why is it that sometimes I feel like I wasn't meant to be on this earth? What is it that I've done to deserve all this pain in my heart? I try to live my life to the fullest and live by the moment, but how is that I can live my life by being in here when my mom is at home disabled and alone how can I go on knowing my baby is three months old and with a person I don't know? What is my purpose here on earth and how can I fulfill it when everybody is hating on me and bringing me down?

But oh well shhh happens – just have to try to get my life together and find someone who can except me and my son and just take me as I am.

-Sad Eyes

From The Beat: We know that you were going through a lot when you wrote this, but you really seemed to express yourself as a writer. Often, people are so messed up that they can't write, but you have really made your situation clear and shown that you are trying to keep your head up. We wish you the best with your problems and that you find someone to love you and care for you.

My Lovely Story

One time I was on the run and my homie let me stay at his pad. He's been my homie for years. So we were chilling with our other homies and I seen this girl. She was pretty fine. Anyways I kept on starring at her and I think she knew that I liked her.

Then the next day I heard that she did like me. That same day I got with her.

Later on I had a cigarette and she told me that she didn't want me to smoke no more. That how I knew she really cared and loved me and that moment I loved her too. Five days later I got caught by the police and she don't know I'm in here and when I get out I'm going to show all my love to her and hopefully she'll love me and forgive me.

That's all Beat I'll catch y'all later.

-Porky

From The Beat: Sounds like this girl really cares for you. We hope she does forgive you. You need to keep yourself out of trouble. Or how do you plan on keeping a girl friend if you're gonna keep bringing yourself here?

Love

This is Candygirl, just here showing some love to The Beat Within. Well, I have a little story of love.

Love to me is not forever. It might be there, but then it will go away. I've been in love but I don't know if it was really love. Anyway, I'm still looking for love, and for a daddy for my baby, not yet born. But yeah, my baby's daddy is a piece of work. Well, I'm out. Late.

-Candygirl

From The Beat: Thanks. We love the love. We love to provide you with an outlet for your feelings and opinions. And we're not sure we know any more about love than anyone else. Some of it does come and go, and the going hurts. We know that much. And we know that it's wise to learn from our experiences. We wish you good fortune on the way to finding a love that lasts.

Rescue My Brother And I

I wish somebody could rescue me, or me and my brother. I feel terrible because me and him were doing so good and now we are both here.

As for me, being older, I could have prevented this. We are both being charged with strong-armed robbery because my brother and his friend robbed a gas station with a gun, and I was something like the driver, so we are both looking at CYA. So bro, if you are reading this, I'm sorry and I love you. But yeah, I hope we beat this case and return home fast.

And to my mama: you need to come see us more so you can make my day. I love you.

-Yung Sha T

From The Beat: The fact that you are not mad at your brother and that you feel responsible proves that you are down for your family and a great big sister. Good luck with your case and good luck with the future.

My Love, My Sister

My love story is when I started bonding with my sister Shatel. We used to hate each other and argue, then we started smoking and drinking. We got hella closer, then I got caught up for a 211 charge with my sister since she was the driver.

I love my sister a lot and I'm sad that we're both in here. I think every night that we shouldn't have went to Bulldogs. So all I gotta say is I love you sis and take care, and we will see mom soon by.

-Gadsden

From The Beat: It is no accident that those that we care most deeply about are the ones we want to do the most for. Not a day goes by where you wouldn't bail Shatel out if you could. When you both get out, how will you live differently to make sure she's kept safe?

Rescued By My Bro

Well I remember when I was in a bad situation when I was walking down the street and out of the cuts these punks just took flight on me and I was by myself. So all I can do was throw swings everywhere and I was on the floor bleeding and so good thing my brother was coming home from his lady's pad. He ran up to those punks and then started smashing on those punks and then my brother helped me up. When they ran I thought to myself what would've I done if my bro would've stayed at his lady's pad damn... So that's a time when I got rescued. That's it for this week Beat, alrato.

-Lil' Man

From The Beat: Damn that is a bad situation to be caught in. We're glad that you had your older brother there to help you out. Be careful when you're out there in the streets because the streets are not safe especially living on the edge. We advise you to stay off the streets as much as possible to try and avoid the most trouble. Get back to school!

Love

Love is gay,
love sucks,
love is not true,

'cause the love you have for me is not the love I have for you.

-Ronnie

From The Beat: Sometimes disappointment and sorrow can make a wrong turn into bitterness. In a situation like this, here's a question you could consider asking yourself: why would you want to spend time with someone who didn't want to spend time with you? What joy would that bring? You deserve better than that, don't you?

Serious Thoughts

Do what you do,
but think before you act,
know the consequences and know what could happen in the future,
so you don't have to be the person to have regrets and have to look back,
but just know the past catches up to you,
and it's all a game with this life of hate and pain,
but know most people have the same problems,
but everybody ain't the same,
it's a reality check,
so look up to the Lord and ask Him to be your daily guide,
but this ain't no lecture,
I do sin every day,
but once the day is over I clear my sins,
while I lay and pray,
keep your head up and stay safe, your boy

-Peanutt

From The Beat: We can tell that you've learned a lot about your experiences, and are now a more educated person. And it's wonderful that you've found a source of redemption in your God, and that you've chosen to share these things. Thanks for offering your advice to readers, and keep on being a blessing to others!

Cheating

Q-onda? Pues, I got locked up and I left five girls over there; they all write to me in here. But there is one that wrote to me telling me that I was cheating on her when I was out. She doesn't write to me but I don't trip because when I got out I know that she's wanna get with this vato again.

I am out until paper meets pencil, Alrato.

-Lil' One

From The Beat: You're fortunate to have a girl who may still want to be with you even though you've cheated on her, but is this really the best way to let a relationship grow well? Think about how you would like to be treated in a relationship, and what kind of loyalty you would like from your friends.

Complaints!

This week one of the topics was complaining. I was complaining today because I went to court and I thought I was getting out. That's what my PO told me but turns out that the "homie" pointed the finger at me so I have to wait until the 1st of February to see what they're going to sentence me to. So I was complaining all day because I was pissed off.

So that's one of the times when I was complaining until then Beat stay tuned until then, alrato.

-Lil' Man

From The Beat: If you don't like being locked up then why do you keep getting into trouble? What's the plan so you never return?

Trying To Be A Rebel

Stuck on the street
Still on the run
Not trying to listen
Trying to be a rebel
No one can get to my level
I'm gonna get to the top
But stuck in here
I went straight to the bottom
I'm gonna stay strong
Be a woman
Not let boys get in my way
'Cause all they do is cause drama
Females hate
Always talk too late
Tired of lil' kid games
He needs to grow up
'Cause Queen Bee's on the way
Of moving up

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: You may be stuck on the street on the outs, but right now you're stuck in juvy. What are you rebelling against? What are you running toward? Maybe if you have a destination or ambition in mind, it would be better if you didn't count on this guy to grow up so he can accompany you, but just build your life the way you want it on your own, as soon as you're free again.

Love Is Blind

Love is blind
The love you never see from behind
Love can hurt
Love can burn
Love's torn me into thirds
Love's been here, love's been there
My tears have been pouring
No sleep, no never snoring
Can't eat, 'cause I'm in love
Love is blind
Love makes me shine
'Cause I'm in love

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: You describe your symptoms very accurately. Sounds like love. As tempting as it may be for you to want to surrender completely to this guy you love, can you make sure your own personal life is stable, growing, something you're proud of? It will give you security and independence, whether or not the life you dream of with this guy evolves the way you hope. You'll have your own life to go back to and live.

Sliding In The Rain

One rainy morning me, my girlfriend, my friend, Tyler, and one of my girlfriend's friends, we were all at my house.

My girl friend was getting ready. We were about to go to the mall. She was taking long to get ready.

Me and my friend, Tyler, decide to take my car and try to slide it in the rain. We were going 75 in a 25-mile-an-hour speed limit. The car started sliding. We crash into my neighbors' bushes and their fence. The neighbor called the cops.

Me and my friend, we ditch the car and started running. As soon as we got around the corner, the cops were there. We pretended, like, we weren't running. I got two tickets and my car got towed back to my house.

-Joe

From The Beat: What you probably intend to be a funny story has a really scary element in it. What could have happened while you were going 75 miles an hour in a 25 mph zone? Was it a residential area? What if a child had been crossing the street in the rain and hadn't seen your car plowing down the street? The child would be dead and your life would be ruined, because you'd never ever forget it.

Fast

Heart is racing like a NASCAR
Don't know what to do, or what to say
Heart just stopped for five minutes
Saw his face and I just froze
Couldn't believe

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: Can you just concentrate on your freedom, getting out of juvy, and planning on how you're going to get your own life the way you want it on the outs, and let your relationship with this guy just take its own natural course?

Love Is A Game I Never Win

Love is a game that I never win
Because I find myself torn up at the end
Guys like playin' with my head
They like hurting me
I give everything I got
But I still get hurt at the end
I'm sick and tired of pain
So I don't mess with little boys any more
I only mess with real men

-Lil' Mama

From The Beat: What does winning at love mean to you? Having a guy you love, love you, too? That's real. But do you know that every young man, no matter how old he is, already has his own life, problems, dreams, before he meets you? He's not just a needy young man who's waiting for you or any young lady to come into his life. So when you meet any young or "real" man, can you just get to know each other, enjoy each other, find out who he is, before you get your heart into him so deeply that you get hurt?

Mi Jefa's Complaining

Hey, q-vole, Beat? Today's subject is complainin'. I'm going to write about mi jefa's complaining.

Damn, my mom sure knows how to complain. She complains about everything. She does have the right reasons to be complaining, though. Let me write down some palabras (words) 'bout mi jefita's complaining.

The reason why mi jefa complains is because I'm never home. Usually I'll be at home during the day. Around 1-5 pm, I'll start talking to people on the phone 'bout kicking it. I'll start making plans to see what's up for later that night. Once I finally find out, it will be around seven or eight. I usually start shaving my head with a razor, hop in the shower, get dressed, and everything else I need to do to get ready. Once I'm ready and done with everything, I'll call one of my homeboys or homegirls.

When I call my homies to come pick me up, they get to my house around nine or 9:30 pm. When I get picked up, we usually go to 7-11 or any other liquor store. We start buying a whole bunch of liquor. We either start buying Mickey's (40 oz. malt liquor) or OEs (Old English malt liquor.) Sometimes we'll have to buy some sparks (energy drinks with a low level of alcohol), too, for the ladies. Also, sometimes we buy hard liquor. Actually, every time. But, yeah, anyways, once we got the perk, we go to a telly (motel party) or a house and kick it all night 'til, like, the morning.

When it's, like, eleven in the morning, or even twelve in the afternoon, I get a ride from a homie. Once I get home, my mom always locks the door so mi carnal is always the one that opens the house door. To be continued...

-Shy Boy

From The Beat: Sounds like you pretty much party 24/7, and every night is like a weekend night, right? What about school? A job? Who pays for all of your illegal liquor? Your mom is right and you even write that you know that—that she should complain about how you're living your life. You have partying down, down, but what are you building for your future?

Old E, My Cold Love

What's up? What's going on?
 I miss you right now because you're gone
 You were the one who took away my hurt and pain
 You filled me up with forty ounces of game
 My mom forbid you from coming to my crib
 She didn't approve of your ways or the way you live
 When you acted cold, it was the best
 You and I would act, like, forget the rest
 I loved it when there was more of you around
 There were no problems or worries to get me down
 You were my only one
 Remember we were on the run?
 That's when we fell in love
 I spill a little for the homeboys above
 I love you a lot; you'd never find me with another
 I can't believe we ended up being lovers
 But no longer can we be
 I'm sorry, Old E

-Sneaky

From The Beat: Very imaginative poem! So you fell in love with your beer! No matter that she loves everyone who drinks her in, right? You must miss her every time you're thirsty! Now that you're in juvy, have you fallen in love with water?

Love

Out of all the fish in the sea
 I knew you were the one for me
 All the dudes were jockeying
 But I did the talking
 Started sucking neck
 Knowing you'd be gone in a sec
 I hold you in my hand
 Then I smash the can
 Red, black and gold
 You make me so bold
 I like you better when you're cold
 I love you, King Cobra

-Alok

From The Beat: Funny poem. You use a lot of ambiguous images that could apply to amore for a young lady, and only reveal at the end that you're in love with your beer. Put the beer down and handle your business!

Love

What's up, Beat? So, today I'm going to tell something.
 Well, I am so confused because there is a boy I like, but he makes me cry and he tells me that he likes me and he tells this other girl that he like her. So I am confused.
 Why do guys have to play with my head? I need a real man.

-Sad Girl

From The Beat: It really hurts when you find out some guy you like, likes you but also likes another girl. All you can really do to defend yourself against this guy's kind of deceit is to watch him, get to know him as a friend, and see where he takes it from here.

In Juvy With My Sister

I'm back again for my fifth time. This time I only got a week, so it's all good, but the judge said next time would be placement for sure, and I'm in here with my sister, so I don't know how my mom feels.

-Chub

From The Beat: You're lucky because you're already home free, so please take the judge's warning seriously and protect your liberty! It's wonderful that you have a good heart for your mother. Now that you're home, can you help her out, especially since your sister's still in juvy?

Just Me

Don't call me baby
 Don't call me boo
 Don't call me princess
 Don't be a fool
 I'm not your girl
 You're not my world
 Just me, that's all I need
 Boy, right now, stop your lyin'
 'Cause in a month
 I don't want to be cryin'
 I know you're just a shady guy
 Nothin' close to bein' fly
 So don't call me baby
 Don't call me boo
 I'm not your princess
 So don't be a fool

- Angel

From The Beat: Even if you're right about this guy, it hurts that he's pretending to want to get close to you, doesn't it? Keep your cool, your independence. You've already learned a lot of valuable lessons about life, about young men. Stay strong.

We're Both Locked Up

When I'm in my cell
 I hear ocean waves crashing
 And wishing I was in my car, mashing
 'Cause I feel like flashing
 So angry that it's driving me insane
 I have pain
 Running through my vein
 Why is my baby locked up?
 Now I can't even say, "What's up?"
 Lusting to hear him spit
 And wanting to see him in his fresh fit
 I remember saying
 "We'll be together forever"
 Now we're both locked up
 So it will be a never
 You might think I'm a fool
 But that's cool
 'Cause I love my boo

-Lil' Mama

From The Beat: Since you're both in juvy, who has been thinking lately for the two of you, anybody? You may be missing him, but how about missing your own freedom? What kind of life are you creating for yourself on the outs, with or without this guy? Does he encourage you to finish high school? Get a real job? Build a career? What do you inspire in him? He's probably in his juvy clothes just like you are, and not in any fresh fits.

Tears

Tears rolling down my cheek
 My room's full of heat
 Can't eat, can't sleep
 Tired of life
 'Cause all I do is cheat
 Never been beat
 But love's beat me down
 Just thinking of him
 Makes me go wild
 It's a natural high
 He's got me on
 But at the time
 Tears just roll down

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: Something's deeply wrong if you're crying over this guy. It's natural that love can make you feel high, but if you also feel beat down because of your love for him, is your heart trying to warn you not to trust him? You may not know the answer yet, but it's always wise to listen to your heart.

Prove It

A cold breeze blows voices through the mist.
Desperate cries shatter the placid surface
of a sea of presumptions.
I'm screaming for you to please see me for what
I truly am. I am a talented individual.
I hold knowledge unknown to you,
gifts that make me who I am.
I am not composed solely of my mistakes,
so forget that ignorant opinion.
Imagine the good I can do.
Help me to do it.
You say that's what you want to do.
Prove your intentions true.

-Jackson

From The Beat: How would you suggest that people prove their good intentions, re: you? If you were wearing the judge's robe and a young, talented fellow like yourself appeared before you, with a record exactly like yours, what would you do to help this young man move constructively down the path?

Why

Why I cannot remember great ideas, I will never know.
Why great things get thrown away, people will not understand.
Why do bad things happen to good people? We'll never have an answer.
Why this, why that? Why who, or why where? Why....
Because.

-Nathan

From The Beat: Good poem Nathan. And just for the record, we don't have the answers you're looking for. If you find them, please let us know.

Rescue Me

I remember a scary situation I was in at one time.
This situation put a ton of adrenaline and rage into my nervous system. I was accused of confronting a man with a samurai sword, with the intent to carve a keyhole in his abdomen. It wasn't true. Anyway, my lawyer saved my butt in court and the case was dropped. To think I would be brave enough to at it with swords, like a samurai warrior. Ha!!!

-Nathaniel

From The Beat: We're glad it wasn't you.

The One Who's Always There

This is about the love of my life.
Ever since we met, we have had a special connection.
When we had our first kiss, the sparks were flying.
It was at the beach, by a bonfire.
It was very romantic.
We've been together about 9 months, officially,
but we have gone in and out of this relationship.
Though we fight a lot about the way I live, she's always there.
I know she cares because she's always telling me I need to straighten up.
Even though we fight, she has stuck with me through thick and thin.
She's still with me now and she'll always have a place in my heart.
I'll always love her, no matter what's happening.

-O Tank

From The Beat: Considering where you're writing from, maybe your girl has a pretty good point about your life style. If she can't get you to change, what will it take?

Complaining

There's a kid in here that I always beat in ping pong, and every time I do, he starts whining like a dog. It's better to be a good sport than a poor sport. He also lies all the time, selling wolf items. I wonder why some people want to be something they're not. Just be yourself, feel me?
Well Beat, I'm leaving in a couple of days, so, late.

-Kevin

From The Beat: Kevin, at one time or another, most of us have wanted to be someone we're not. But your advice is good. We'd best be just ourselves. We can't be anyone else, anyway. The trick is to be the best self we can be. Some say that's where happiness is. Have you heard this one? To thine own self be true. Thou cannot then be false to any man. A fellow named Shakespeare wrote those words, for one of the characters in his play.

Secret

A secret consumed my soul.
So many ears. Who could I trust.
I stare into space. I see now. I have a friend.
No more sitting on the couch.
The fog in my mind has cleared.
I have a train to catch.
I won't stay behind again.
I have dreams to pursue.
I embrace the mistake.
I release the secret.

-G

From The Beat: Where can we get a ticket for that train?



A Feeling For A Girl

This feeling about a girl I know is a trip to me.
Blinded by her beauty that's so strong
it just may drop me to my knees.
These feelings of mine cannot be shown by words,
but by actions. But for some odd reason
this feeling of mine is scared to be shown.
A heart that was once stone melted like ice
when I laid my eyes on hers.
This feeling for her will forever burn.

-Joseph

From The Beat: When you rise from your knees, the work begins. How will you transform your behavior so you can enjoy your new friend's company? Does she motivate you to make the changes? What will those changes be? What's your plan?

Es Importante Luchar Por Tu Vida

Cuando me aleje de mi madre tenía que luchar por mi mismo. Cuando uno se separa de ellos, uno tiene que pasar por muchos conflictos para poder vivir.

Cuando sali de Honduras rumbo a Estados Unidos cruce Mexico por 30 días y tres días en el desierto de Arizona. Todos ese trayecto me enseñaro saber lo difícil que es alejarse de las personas que más quieres. Al estar seis meses sin poder trabajar, me senti mui desesperado por que estoy no poder seguir adelante.

Vine a San Francisco a vender droga y eso me ayudo un poco. Al tiempo caí preso y todo volvió a ser igual. Ahora que salga luchare por mi vida. Nunca es tarde para seguir luchando. Recuerden que con Dios todo se puede.

From The Beat: Se nota que has luchado mucho por venir a este lugar, pero también se nota que no duró mucho todo el esfuerzo que hicistes. Tomastes la decisión incorrecta y ahora estas sufriendo las consecuencias. Todo llegue a su fin de la misma manera como comienza. Si te dan otra oportunidad, úsala. Siempre piensa en las consecuencias que traen las cosas negativa y busca lo mejor para tu y tu familia.

It's Very Important To Fight For Your Life

When went away from my mother, I knew I had to fight for myself. When you separate from them, you have to go through a lot of conflicts in order to live.

When I left Honduras to the U.S, I crossed Mexico over 30 days and a few days in the desert of Arizona. Those movements made me realize how important is to be away from those you love. Being here for six months, has made me depressed because I'm stuck and not succeeding.

I came to San Francisco to sell drugs and that helped me a little bit. After a while, I got locked up and everything went back to the same. Now when I get out, I'm going to fight for my life. It's never too late to start fighting. Keep in mind that with God everything is possible.

-Pana, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's noticeable that you have fought very hard to come here, but your effort didn't last too long. You took the wrong choice and now you are suffering the consequences. Everything gets to an end the same way it started. If you get another chance, use it. Always think about the consequences that negative things bring and think about the best for you and your family.

Confío En Los Doctores

Yo si confío en los doctores porque son personas que salvan vidas. Nos mantienen al tanto de nuestra salud, ellos ven que estemos bien y tengamos una vida saludable.

En mi vida he visto varios doctores de los cuales tengo una buena opinión de ellos. Aqui los doctores en Estados Unidos son muy capacitados al igual que los doctores en Honduras.

From The Beat: Pues es una buena profesión. ¿Ya que te gustan muchos los doctores, has pensado algún día volverte uno de ellos? Tú también pudieras salvar muchas vidas.

I Trust The Doctors

I trust them because they save lives. They keep us inform of our health, their job is to keep us well, and to have a healthy life.

In my life, I've known many doctors who I have a good concept from them. The doctors in the United States are very reliable so as the ones in Honduras.

-Josue, San Francisco

From The Beat: Well, it's a good profession. Since you like doctor so much, have you thought in becoming one in the future? You can also save many lives.

Que Loquera

Mira que loquera

Estando preso y pensando en ti

Como yo me senti, sabiendo que estas aqui

Y los dos viviendonos

Los dos queriendo besarnos y acariciarnos

No sé que decir, yo te veo y me recuerdo

De todo lo que hemos pasado

Y me pongo a reir y a llorar

Pero asi es la vida, asi corre el agua que no para de correr
Te amo.

Que pedo yo sufro mucho

Y pienso en ti mucho

Papy no vayas a correr

Yo voy a hacer el grupo pa' que tu también lo hagas

Yo te voy a escribir y te voy a llamar

Te amo, no te aguites

Ok aqui estoy para ti y tú para mí

Por favor no me vayas a olvidar. Te amo.

Esta ruca te dice soy tuya.

From The Beat: Que bonito poema, pero para la otra prefirmos que nos escribas algo que nosotros podamos aprender o saber de ti. Esta carta se la hubieses escrito directo a el. Por esta vez, la publicaremos pero para la próxima vez, no lo haremos. Preguntale a alguien que hable Español sobre lo que puedes poner en el Beat. Gracias por tus palabras. ¿Que tal si nos escribes un poema sobre tu vida?

What A Mess

Look at this mess

Locked up and thinking of you

I felt weird knowing that you are here

And we both looking at each other

We both with the desires of kissing and caressing

I don't know what to say, I see you

And I remember all we have gone through in the past

And I start smiling and then I cry

But that's how life is,

That's how the water runs and it doesn't stop running

I love you.

What a shame, I suffer so much

Papy, don't you run away

I'm going to do my group-home and I'll call you

I love you. Don't get down

Ok, here I am for you, and you're for me

Please, don't forget me. I love you.

This girl is saying that she's yours.

-Negra, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is a beautiful poem, but for the next time, we would prefer a poem about your life or something that others can learn from. You should have sent this letter straight to him. For this time, we will publish it, but for the next time, we won't. Ask a Beat member or a Beat writer about the purpose of our work. What about a poem about your life?

Lo Que Quiero

Yo espero regresar a la casa en unas cuantas semanas para estar con la familia y no volver a estos lugares. Quiero terminar la escuela la me falta poco y despues quiero un trabajo.

From The Beat: Esperamos que llegues a cumplir con tus palabras. Todo es posible cuando se desea con mucho deseos del corazón.

What I Want

I hope to come back home in a few weeks to be with my family and never come back to these places. I want to finish school, which won't be too long and then I want to look for a job.

-Plans, San Francisco

From The Beat: We are hoping that you hold on to your words. Everything is possible when the desire comes from the heart.

Estoy Aprendiendo

No no sé escribir pero pongo a unos de mis amigos para que escriban por mí. Desde que llegue aquí me han enseñado a muchas cosas. Le agradezco a Dios que me haya traído aquí por las cosas malas que hago. Gracias a Dios aquí estoy aprendiendo a leer y a escribir.

From The Beat: Por una parte nos da alegría saber que estas aprovechando tu tiempo en cosas que te ayudaran en la vida. Sigue adelante aprendiendo que el conocimiento es muy importante en nuestras vida. ¿No crees que sería genial aprender en una escuela fuera de este lugar? Sería lo mejor!

I Am Learning

I don't know how to write, but one of my friends in here is doing it for me.

Ever since I came in here, I've been learning a lot of things. I thank God for being in here because of the bad things I do. Thank God I'm learning to read and write.

-Sebastian, San Francisco

From The Beat: In one side, we are happy to know that you are using this time for something that will help your life. Keep learning, because it will help you to make things easier in your life. But, don't you think that it would be better if you learn from a school and not from here? It would be much better.

Dios Existe

Bueno ahora que estoy aquí preso, he necesitado mucha ayuda y sé que me han cerrado las puertas. He recibido una gran ayuda ya que le he pedido ayuda a Dios. Le he rezado para que me ayude en las cortes. Yo siento que El ha estado ahí conmigo y por eso me ha ido bien.

Siento que desde que le pedi ayuda a Dios con todo el corazón, El me ha oído y me ayudado. Gracias a El, en esta semana quedo libre.

Hoy comprendo que la ayuda que necesitaba la encuentre en Dios. El es quien me rescató. Me gustaría que cuando necesites ayuda se las pidas a Dios y veras que El te escuchara y todo saldrá bien, si confías en El.

Ojalá que esta historia se publique para que otros en esta misma situación mía, busquen ayuda de Dios. Y cuando la obtengan, no se olviden dar las gracias.

From The Beat: Claro que vamos a publicar esta historia. Todo lo que venga de ustedes, será bienvenidos para nuestra publicación. Y esperamos que muchos sigan tus palabras que nos has dicho. Esperamos que tu fe en Dios te ayude en tus necesidades y que te ayude a convertirte en una persona mejor. ¿Cuales son tus planes cuando salgas de este lugar? ¿Que haras, aparte de tu fe en Dios?

God Exist

Well now that I'm locked up, I've needed a lot of help and I know that they have closed all doors to help me. But, I've been granted with help I ask God for. I've prayed so much to Him so he can help me. I feel He's with me and that's why everything has gone well for me.

I feel that ever since I ask God for help with all my heart, He has heard me and helped me. Thank to Him I'll be free this week.

Now I understand that the help I needed I founded in God. He rescued me. I wish that whenever you need help, and ask God for it and you'll see that he will listen to you. Everything will be fine for you if you have faith in Him.

I hope this story gets publish so others who find in the same situation can find the help of God.

-Josue, San Francisco

From The Beat: Of course we are going to publish this story. Everything that comes from you is very welcome to our publication. We hope many of them to fallow your words. We also hope God help you in your needs and to help you become a better person. What are your plans upon your release? What will you do, besides your faith in God?

Mi Novia

Hola yo les voy a contar sobre una historia de amor que tube antes de llegar aquí. Antes de llegar aquí, tenía mi novia afuera. Iba a la escuela por ella y la acompañaba a su casa. Ella me decía que me saliera de todas las cosas malas que estaba haciendo y que me enmendara a Dios para poder salir de las cosas que andaba haciendo.

Cuando me trajeron aquí, dice mi familia que de los amigos que tenía afuera, que no se preocupan por mí, y que diario una muchacha llamaba preguntando por mí.

Ella fue la única que me está apoyando para salir y todavía me está esperando. Diario me dice que me ama y que nunca la olvide. Eso es amor real. Ojalá todas las personas tubiera una novia como la mía que apoya y nos dice que adelante.

From The Beat: Se nota que ella ha sido una buena novia quien ha querido ayudarte en muchas cosas. Deberias de seguir su consejo, ya que lo único que ella quiere es ayudarte en todo lo que pueda porque te quiere. Muchachas como estas son muy difíciles de encontrar. Nosotros de ti buscamos la forma como no perderla. Recuerda que uno nunca sabe hasta que lo pierde o lo tiene perdido.

My Girl

Hi, I am going to share a story about the love I had before I came here. Before I got here, I had a girl on the outs. I would go to school for her and I would walk her home. She would advice me to avoid the things I was doing on the outs and to accept God to get rid of the things I was doing.

When I came here, my family told me that the friends from the outs didn't care about me, and that only a girl would call me.

She is the only one who is supporting me upon my release and she's still waiting for me. She tells me that she loves me everyday and to never forget that. That is real love. I wish all men had a girl like mine who can be supportive and help them success.

-Edgar, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's obvious that she has been a good girl who has tried to help you in many things. You should fallow her advice giving the fact that all she wants is for your own good. Girl like that one are hard to find. If we were you, we would fight hard in keeping her. Remember that you never know what you have until you loose it.

Extraño A Mi Madre

Hola, yo les quiero decir que extraño a mi madre porque con ella yo siempre vivía muy feliz. Ella a mí siempre me platicaba cosas buenas y yo las mías. Siempre ella me decía que fuera precavido. Me aconsejaba de que no hiciera cosas malas. Por eso yo la extraño porque me falta el calor de ella y su cariño. Siempre íbamos a almorzar juntos todos en familia.

From The Beat: Lastimosamente no escuchastes lo que tu madre te decia y la consecuencias ya la estas enfrentando. ¿Crees que despues de esto le llegues a poner atención a lo que te aconseja? Recuerda que ella sólo quiere lo mejor para ti.

I Miss My Mother

Hi, I want to tell you that I miss my mother because I live very happy by her side. She talks to me about her things and vice-versa. She would tell me to be careful and not to do bad things. That's why I miss her because I miss her warmth and love. We would have lunch together very often.

-Saul, San Francisco

From The Beat: Sadly you didn't listen to what you mother told you and now you are facing the taste of consequences. Do you think this lesson will help you to pay attention to what she advice you? Remember that all she wants is the best for you.

I Wonder

Sometimes I wonder why my parents brought me to this world. I wonder if they never brought me into this world, would they be happier than they are now? I wonder why they waste their time in coming to visit me, when I'm nothing. I just make them cry and stress so many times, and yet they still come. It just feels like I don't deserve everything I have, like their love, for example.

I wonder how would the world be if I die soon? Sometimes I just wish I was never brought in this world, because if I die, I would feel no more pain...

I wonder why did I have to grow up so fast? Why can't I go back when I played soccer? I wonder, "What happened to that kid?" I wonder why I live in a messed up world? I wonder why I have so much pain inside of me? I wonder about everything.

-Lil' Gyko

From The Beat: Growing up can be very difficult, and pain is a very difficult emotion to deal with at any age. But can we ask you something? Do you respect your parents? If you do, then don't you have to respect their love for you? Even if you can't understand why they love you, don't you think they se something in you that is worth loving? And if you worry about making them cry and causing them pain, then don't even think about ending your life. That is a prescription to give them life-long pain and tears, and we know you don't want to do that. Trust us that the pain you're feeling today will not always be there. Sometimes, you just have to have faith that tomorrow will be different from today.

Thinking New

Being in here changed my life. Before I was locked up, I stole, I drank, and I smoked every day. And now, since I've been locked up, I changed my life from being bad to good. Being in here made me think about so much—my family, my friends and the people I love. Now that I been in here, I thought about all the dumb things I have done and all the many things I have did and all the wrong choices I had made in my life. So being in here changed my life so much. And, in a way, I am thankful for that.

-Christopher

From The Beat: Yes, you should be thankful if this place has caused you to think about where your life was leading you, and where you truly want to go. Of course, it's easier to make promises in here than to keep them out there, so we hope you have the courage to keep the wonderful promises you're making when you are free again to choose your own course.

Qui Custodiet Ipos Custodes?

Who shall guard the guardians?
These pinnacles of power
Who shall guard the guardians?
Before which armies cower
Who shall guard the guardians
In their failing hour?
Who shall guard the guardians
When the guardians' graves flower?
Then, again...
Who will guard us?

-Sky

From The Beat: It is rare enough in the so-called "free world" to find anyone familiar with this quotation by the Roman poet Juvenal (and almost unheard of in one imprisoned who, unlike Juvenal, is a juvenile), and this ongoing concern of the Greek philosopher Plato. Who shall guard the guards? It is a question is old as these men and as current as today's news. Who investigates the investigators? Who investigates the lawmakers when they are lawbreakers? Who investigates a president who steals an election? One of the worst aspects of our prison system (including juvenile halls) is that those in charge resist outside and independent observers, telling us to trust them to guard themselves — a prescription for all manner of abuse and rot. But by adding that final question, you turn it into a profound conundrum, one of those puzzles where two mirrors face each other, each reflecting the other back and back towards infinity. You're amazing!

Don't Be Like My Uncles

One day me and my uncle was talkin' when I went to his house. He asked me if I like juvy and I said, "No." He was like, "Okay, that's good." He started preaching to me for thirty minutes. He told me, "It's not worth bangin' and goin' to prison."

My uncle was locked up in Pelican Bay for twelve years, and he said, "Aye, Uce, to tell you the truth, I regret being bad and I want you to change your life, 'cause I don't want you goin' to jail or prison. It's not worth it. It's not worth it, Uce. I don't want you ending up like me and your uncles. Make a big change for the family. Be the first to make a change! It really hurted me when got locked up. I got much alofaz (love) for you, nephew. So be the first one in the family to change, Uce. I love you, nephew."

That's how my uncle told me and now I'm locked up again. When I get out I'ma prove to him and my family that I'm finna be the first in the family to finish school and change my life around.

-Looney

From The Beat: We hope you keep this promise, Looney — not for your uncle or your family, but for yourself. Your uncle is trying to tell you that being in the hall is pretty easy compared to time in Pelican Bay. He is hoping — as we are hoping — that you don't have to learn this painful lesson first hand.

Betrayed

What shall we do
Us fabulous few?
Stuck in this war
"Get on the floor!"
The whistling death
Makes me guess,
"Who will be next?"
I don't wanna die, "I confess
"Let it be someone else
I'm too young, myself!"
Ah, what a horrible chance
As up I glance
And hear the drone
Of engines that are flown.
"Lights out!"
The sergeant shouts.
As the night becomes day
In fear I lay,
Praying to God
On this wet sod
Drenching my form
'Til I wish I was never born...
"Ahhh!" goes the war cry
Now to fight or fly.
As I turn around to fight
My enemy comes into sight...
We stare at each other.
I realize it's my Brother!
"Oh, God, what a choice."
My eyes become moist.
"Brother, what shall we do?"
"I'm sorry," he says "I have to kill you."
This poem was inspired by Catch-22...

-Sky

From The Beat: A betrayal as old as Cain and Abel/Killer and victim in the Bible's fable/As current as this morning's news/Where boys kill boys in loyalty to their crews/Where Presidents who give lip-service to "respect for life"/Wage war on foreign lands bringing death and endless strife/A country built with sweat and tears of human slaves/Calling itself "the land of the free and the home of the brave"/Where slogans substitute for reality ("Equal Justice Under Law")/As if, by merely saying it, we could make gold out of straw/And yet there is hope in those whose minds are freed/A goal so hard to achieve, a Cath-22, indeed!

Destiny

So far my life has been pain, tears and struggles
 To the point where I lost my balance and started to stumble
 I know deep down inside my heart was not weak, but too
 strong to ever crumble
 I was taught at a very young age: never give up the fight
 and always rumble
 Because the day you do, surely is nothing but trouble
 Life is like football, there's always fumbles
 I learned from the unpleasantness of my struggles
 I leaned to be strong
 I know the weaker you become, the faster you're gone
 I once was blinded from the truth
 Now I see, but why this realization took so long
 That's when my heart ticked and blew like a bomb
 Because I knew my creation and my status
 Was meaningless like an unwritten song
 By the grace of God He presented me himself with the
 Book of Psalms (118:8)
 That's when I acknowledged life wasn't completely wrong
 To survive you have the heart of a lion, and to
 be mentally and emotionally strong
 I have a great destiny that awaits for me down the road,
 but I'm still stuck in the fog
 Half way out, but it's still not completely gone
 I will prevail and ultimately achieve my destiny, I won't
 stop until it rests in my palm
 I have some attending to do, so I'm gone

-Lil' V

From The Beat: It is clear from this inspiring poem that you have turned a major corner in your life, and your destiny stretches out before you to grasp. Even though you end your poem with the words, "I'm gone," it's as obvious as the day is long that you are far from gone! You are here in the world, in the moment, and your future is going to be so much better than your past. You say that God's grace gave you the wisdom and strength found in Psalms, but we're still curious to know what you did to let God know you were ready for that grace.

FEW For Many

The darkness is coming
 All the signs are clear
 We can only stop it by loving
 Insanity is near...
 Fear shall reign
 Law and order lost
 Prevailed by sadness and pain
 This is the cost
 Of living a life so vain...
 Maybe you'll believe
 Or maybe you will not
 But I have planted a seed
 Deep within your thought...
 The choice is yours, of course
 But when it's time to act
 I pray that you use force
 And join to form a past...
 The world is going to end
 Even though I don't know when
 This message that I send
 To all descendents of men,
 Fight the End of the World

-Sky

From The Beat: Our prayer is that this profound seed you have planted is fertile, and grows into full flower in the minds of all those with open and eager minds, the necessary ingredients for ideas to take root and grow. You have strengths (of character, of honesty, of self-expression) that let us look to you for leadership and decency in a world desperate for decent leaders.

It's Hard Being Brown

For a hot minute, I've been in an' out of these walls and locked doors. Always telling myself, "It's my last time here," but eventually end up back for the pettiest shhh. At least this time I know it's my last, because being a gangsta, it's hard.

It's hard being brown. I cannot lie. Puttin' in work when it's not even necessary, hurting my family when I sure don't want to, but I did it anyways, without thinking about the consequences. Livin' a lifestyle that I love but can't ignore.

It's hard being brown. Walking down the calle, not knowin' if the cops or the enemies hop out the corner, looking for pleito (a fight.) I always watch my espalda (back,) no matter where I'm at.

I'm just brown and proud to be what I am today, recognizing my mistakes and not knowing what I'm going to do tomorrow.

It's hard being brown. When police judge you as a good-for-nothing individual, just because I'm walking to da store with creased up Bens and fresh new NYKs, get pulled over, 'cause I'm bald an' brown. Gots to go through da struggle even though I'm on probation, can't live freely until I get off it.

It's coo', though. I'll be free one day, and maybe one day it won't be as hard being brown. Doin' time at any place is hard. Just thinking about the one main fact that you know that you can't do what you feel like or can't have no privacy 'cause you always being watched. But, ey, it's my fault and nobody else's. At least I know dat as well as everybody in YSC dat is reading dis one one time knows what I'm talking about.

One day, homies, one day! It's hard being brown.

-Scarface

From The Beat: You have been with us for a while, Scarface, and we have watched you grow from a child struggling towards adulthood. We admire your honesty so much, your ability to see that the path you've been on has hurt you and hurt your family (and your raza), but is still something hard to give up — not even knowing if you want to or can give it up. That kind of honesty leads to new insights. In fact, nobody can tell for sure where it leads. But we can see that you are not the same youngster who began writing in these pages so long ago, and so we look forward to how your unfolding mind will play out in your life. Yes, it is hard to be brown in a society controlled by others, but it is also hard to be a young person of any color, including white. Adulthood is not easy, either, but maybe, as you grow, it will be easier than what you have already endured. So much is in your own beautiful brown hands...

Freedom Of Mind

My mind has a certain velocity
 For this wild thought of philosophy
 Where we're neither here nor there
 Maybe not anywhere...
 Reality comes to being
 By us perceiving what is seen
 Although this is constantly
 Disputed with such ferocity
 For we all see different
 This may be significant...
 For we as a whole
 Cannot agree on a sole
 Individual topic
 Such a possibility is certainly microscopic
 My, what a quandary
 Maybe I'll do my laundry
 For we'll never come to agree
 After all, speech is free...
 Even though freeDOM isn't

-Sky

From The Beat: How we will miss your mind's wonderings/Your honesty, your wit, the subjects of your ponderings/As you move from the safety of this jail into which you've been hurled/Out into freedom's responsibilities — and an often frightening world/You have consistently raised the standard of thought and word on what is and what has been/

Why Should I Smile?

Why should I smile? Give me two good reasons why I should smile. Let's see if you got something that could make me smile, because every time I try to smile, there's really nothing to smile for, unless you want me to smile for the pain I have in my soul.

My PO comes and visits me and every time he comes, he's all happy and stuff, and he tells me, why ain't I smiling? And I tell him, "Are you here to give me good news?" He says, "No, but you have to live your life." I tell him, "What life? I have no life here in da hall." He tells me that I'll be out soon. Well, soon takes forever...

It seems like every day that passes by takes a hundred years, just so the other day can come. The days go by so slow that a snail is faster than the days. The staff in my unit tells me the same thing, that why am I always mad. I say mad because I'm mad at myself for making my parents cry.

They tell me that I should smile because my court is coming up. But there's nothing to smile about my court. The only thing that would make me smile is if the judge tells me I can go home. Until then...

-Lil' Gyko

From The Beat: We can't make you smile, but we know you can smile. And we know you can make yourself smile in the future by not putting yourself in the hands of the system again. We could tell you a funny joke, but we know that's not the kind of smiling you're talking about. It may seem like time moves slowly, but time moves the same for all of us. It's how we use that time that matters.

Lil' Tiger

Well, right now my life is pretty messed up, 'cause I'm locked up like an animal in a cage. I can't see my Lil' Tiger, Fernando. I miss him so much. I haven't seen him for two months and it's killing me. My PO wanted to send me to camp for eight months for some stupid crime I committed. My PO said that if I behave and don't get into trouble, she is going to let me out on EMP (an ankle bracelet) for three months.

I been doing real good and my PO is really happy with me. I'm about to get out in thirty-six days. I'm so happy, 'cause I will be with my Lil' Tiger again! When I get out I will never come back to this place ever again. I don't want to be separated from my baby. I'm happy that I'm going to be wit' my baby for his birthday. He is going to be five years old. I can't believe he is growing up so fast. It feels like if it was just yesterday when he was born. For my Lil' Tiger, Fernando.

-Speedy

From The Beat: We're glad you're getting out, too Speedy. Your baby needs you, and you know he does. We hope when you say you're here for a "stupid crime," you mean it was stupid to do whatever it was that led to your being taken away from your Lil' Tiger. Since you know what stupid thing got you here, you're smart enough to know what smart things will keep you out of here.

Make The Pain Go Away

It's like I'm killin' myself
The things that I do
Is bad for my heath
I listen to what the people that wanna help me say
But then I still end up smokin' and drinkin'
To make the pain go away

-Shane

From The Beat: Do you really drink and smoke to make the pain go away, or because everybody else you know is drinking and smoking? The real danger with drinking to medicate your pain is that soon you'll find you're addicted to the stuff, and looking for excuses (like pain) in order to drink. In the end, you will only add another layer of pain to the one you're already finding difficult to deal with.

Mi Madre

It's been one month dat passed without seeing my mom. I neva thought dat when you lose someone, dat's when you care. I can't imagine all da pain an' suffering ma mom has felt because of me...

Now dat I'm locked up, I see how much I miss her an' she misses me. Because of ma dumb actions, I'm payin' for dem in da hall. I neva felt like dis in my life. I think of her an' mi carnalito every day an' night. Thinkin', "Do dey think of me at all? Will ma mom eva forgive me through all da pain I caused her? Will mi carnalito think what I'm doin' is okay? Will dey eva understand why I do an' think of dis?" Dat's a question I ask myself every day...

Do I know why I do what I do? Do I think it's a good idea, comin' in and out of the hall? Dat's a question I will only know...

-Lil' Gatita

From The Beat: You begin by thinking of the pain you are causing your mom, but you end by asking yourself if it's worth it or not. How can you decide that hurting your mom is ever worth it? Of course she thinks of you, all the time (just as you think of her all the time). And, of course she will forgive you, because a mother's love is unconditional. As long as you do the things that lead you away from her, you are only thinking of yourself and what you want, and not what she wants (and deserves). Time to stop thinking like the child you were, and begin acting like the adult your mom needs in her life.

Growing Up in Da Bay

Growing up in da Bay ain't no joke
Growing up in da Bay you see people get smoked
Growing up in da Bay we like to blaze
Over there in EPA
We got nothing but that purple haze

-Fernando

From The Beat: If all you're thinking about is blazing that bud, then you're letting this time do you instead of the other way around. What else are you thinking about that might keep you free in the future?

A Letter From My Mom

This is a letter from my mom. It made me cry. I hella love my mom more than anything:

"Dear Son,

There are lots of things I meant to tell you before you grew up and journeyed out into the world. I suppose by now you've learned some of them for yourself. But there are things you need to know and words you'll only hear from someone who's known you from the start... someone who heard your first heartbeat, who held you and looked into your eyes with amazement, someone who relives the wonder and special meaning of this day every year... I want you to know that you're as deeply loved now as you were in my heart back then. And wherever life takes you, that love will forever go with you."

-Looney

From The Beat: Wow, Looney. This letter also made us cry. Do you know what a precious gift you have in a mother that loves you like this? Do you know what it truly means to leave her in tears because you chose to do things you wanted to do, and by doing them, let the system take you from her warm embrace? Don't take this love for granted. Return her love by sacrificing some of what you like doing as she has sacrificed so much for you — from that very first look into your eyes right up until today.

Trapped

Here I am trapped between fo' walls wit' nothing to do, having a lot on ma mind, not knowing who to talk to but masef. Thinkin', "Why did I mess up?"

Dis ain't fo' me. No one belongs trapped like an animal. Got caught up with da game, knowing lo que eva pasar (what will happen), not listenin' to da people dat care 'bout me, jus' bein' una loca (a crazy) wit' los cholos (gangstas), sayin' I deserve betta dan dis...

People sayin', "Oh, now you think you da shhh 'cause you got caught up." But to me dis is a shame, fo' me and mi raza (my family). Thinkin' I didn't give a damn, which I knew I did... Sayin' "I ain't turning back," which I wish I took the right path.

-Lil' Gatita

From The Beat: Wishing you took the right path means nothing if you don't take the right path. It sounds like you want to continue down the path you're on, even knowing what it has already cost you and your family, but at the same time you want to pretend that there's no going back. We want to quote a great English writer called Aldous Huxley. He wrote: "If you have behaved badly, repent, make what amends you can and address yourself too the task of behaving better next time. On no account brood over your wrongdoing. Rolling in the much is not the best way of getting clean."

I'm Alive

Never again will I be dishonored
And never again will I be reminded
Of living within the world of the jaded
They kill inspiration
It's my obligation
To never again allow this to happen
Where do I begin?
The choices are endless
Denying the sin
That you have created

The thing I treasure most in life
Cannot be taken away
I will make the greatest sacrifice
You can't predict where the outcome lies
You'll never take me alive
I'm alive
I'm alive
I'm alive
Change again cannot be considered
I rage again

-Nick

From The Beat: Like a lot of good poetry, Nick, there are things here that we just can't understand. What do you mean, for example, that "change again cannot be considered"? And what are you raging at? If the "sin" you are denying is not of your making, whose sin is it? What are some of the "endless" choices before you, and which one(s) do you plan to make? All these questions beg for answers. We hope you can supply them.

Pray!

When you are locked up, you pray every night for God's blessing. When we're on the outs, we don't even bother to pray for him. When I'm in here, I pray every night for him and ask him to bless me and forget all my sins. I also tell him that I'm going to still pray when I get out. I probably won't do it, but I will try to do it.

What I'm trying to say is that when we're on the outs, we're to busy drinking with the homies, going to parties, and not doing what we are supposed to do. When we go back to the hall, we're getting stupid and complainin' about why does God do this to us. But the truth is that we do it to ourselves. So stop complainin' and stop all the bullshhh, because you're not going to have a life if you keep coming back to the halls. Think before you act!

-Cuba

From The Beat: Our prayer is that you read and re-read what you've written here, and that you take the excellent advice you offer to others. Prayers to God to forget or forgive your sins can only be granted if you, yourself, are committed to stop doing the things you're asking forgiveness for. That doesn't mean you want fall (we all do). But it means you want to stand tall, and live according to what you know to be right, and avoid what you know to be wrong. This is a life-long effort, so keep striving to be a better person. That is advice we all need to follow.

I Wish Talk Was Dead

When I'm in my room, sometimes I wish talk was dead.

When my roommate keeps on yapping, I wish talk was dead.

When I'm in a bad mood and he's yapping, I wish talk was dead.

When I'm reading and he keeps yapping, I wish talk was dead.

Being in here makes me mad and I just want to think

But my roommate keeps yapping, then I wish talk was dead.

He just keeps talking and talking and I wish talk was dead.

When I'm thinking about my family, friends, and my girl,

And he just keeps yapping, I wish talk was dead.

Just being in this extremely boring place makes me wish talk was dead.

-Phat Boi

From The Beat: We wonder if they put you in room by yourself, how long would it be before you were wishing for that talkative roommate? What happens if you ask him to give you a little time to yourself for reflection? Is he ever quiet?

Day After Day, The Same Routine

I just want to say how bad juvenile hall is. You don't have the freedom you have on the outs. When you are in here, you are told when you eat, sleep, wake up, take a shower. If it was any stricter, they would probably tell you when you have to take a shhh. You are locked up in your room most of the day.

During the weekdays, you wake up, get ready for breakfast. Then you only have five minutes to eat, if even that. Then we go back to the unit. You go back to your room for two minutes, then you go straight to school. You go to school for a bit, then you go to lunch and, again, you only have about five minutes to eat. You go back to the unit for twenty minutes, then back to school. After school, you go back to your room for two and a half hours. Then you go to dinner, come back and take a shower and get ready for program.

If you are a zero step, you get thirty minutes of program. If you are a one step, you get one hour of program. Two steps get two hours. KPs are lucky, they get to be out all day if the unit staff is here. There is a three-step that has privileges of a KP, but they don't have to clean and pass out snacks and such.

All of this happens in one day. Everyone goes through the same thing five days a week. On the weekends we are in our rooms all day and we only come out to do LM (large muscle activity) to eat, to shower, and to go to program.

-Young Drak

From The Beat: You've done a very good job of describing the monotonous life you repeat day after day in this place. These are good reasons never to come back to this place. But we're curious to know what you thought juvenile hall would be like before you ever came? How is it different from what you expected? What can you say to youngsters who haven't been here yet, but who are doing the things that will certainly land them here, unless they make some changes?

Without You

Your absence has gone through me

Like thread and a needle

Everything I do is stitched together

Our separation each day

Urgently leads into da night

Like a rose unopened, blackened by da cold

Because we ain't together all things get worse

Everything doesn't improve including da weather

Our daily meat and our bread taste bitter

Trees get less green and rain is wetter

-Lil' Gatita

From The Beat: Whoever you are writing to is someone you clearly love. But just as clearly, you were willing to risk losing this love by giving power to strangers to take you away. Which do you love more, the things you do that lead here, or the person you wish you were with right now? Your words say it is the person; your actions say it is the things you do.

From Me To You

Here I am, viviendo la vida loca con los homies (living the crazy life with my homies). Not thinkin' of ma actions 'til I get locked up. Thinkin', "I ain't gonna get caught." Going to kickbacks, doing all the stupid shhh. Thinkin' it's coo'—smokin' an' sniffin' pookey an' yara. Drinkin' vodka, Hennessy, Patron like da shhh... Not knowing what could happen to me, sayin' dat ma homies are wit' me 'til da end. Until you get into una problema and dey nowhere to be found.

Orale, pues. Alratos

-Lil' Gatita

From The Beat: We want you to read again what you wrote about how your actions are affecting your mother. Your homies will not be with you when your back is up against the wall (or when you're facing real time in a real jail). That's when you'll truly appreciate your mother, because she is the one who will be there, just as she's always been there. To be an adult means to put your own (selfish) needs and desires second sometimes. We know your mom is waiting for that transition to happen. We hope it happens soon.

Talk Is Dead

Talk is dead when you're locked up. They take so much from you when you're in jail. The only thing you have is talking in here, and they try to take that away, too. Sometimes I feel like going crazy, but what can I do but sit in my room, thinking to myself, "Why do I mess up?"

-Gonzalo

From The Beat: We would hate to be told when we could and when we couldn't open our mouths, so we know that you must hate it too. We're very interested to read what answers you have come up with when you ask yourself that question about why you mess up. Can you enlighten us?

Ain't Complainin'

Complainin' ain't payin'

Doesn't take away the pain

Wasn't part of the game

So don't complain

It ain't about the fame

Pain comes hard

And goes far

Starin' at the star

Wishin' I had a cigar

Stuck in the system

I never shed a tear

Ain't got no fears

Nothin' to lose

And nothin' to gain

So I ain't complainin'

'Bout the pain

Doin' couple years

For some beers

I seen my mother in tears

Because her boy

Livin' in a metal tier

Can't complain

'Cause I'm livin' the life

Strive to survive

Livin' in a town

Where boys

Put it down

Always with upside-down

Frowns

-Ghost

From The Beat: We can tell from this poem that you still have plenty to gain — maturity, responsibility, humility, and a sense of reality. "Nothin' to lose?" If you believe that, your eyes are glued shut and your brain is in neutral. Time to engage that capacity for sense and reason that separates you from the rest of the animal kingdom.

El Veterano

I had a dream the other night....

I was walking down the street when I came upon this "youngster" with "Stacy Adam's" on his feet. He was standing on this corner and staring at this store. I could see it in his eyes that his was going to score.

I casually strolled up to him and so intent was he, his mind was on his objective he didn't notice me. I tapped him on the shoulder and said, "what's in the mix?"

He said, "pues ya tu sabes, I got to have that fix."

He was startled at the sight of me standing there next to him.

I said "Don't sweat me, I've been out on that limb. I used to chase that dog food all seven days a week. I'd wake up in the morning with cigarette burns on my cheeks. I'd run in connections and rob the fools blind and if they were on there toe's I'd take them from behind. I played straight drag on geeks and lops and played them out of pocket and if they got hip to my spiel, I'd take them out of socket. I ended up in Quilmas, and now I'm on parole. I did six years most of it was in the hole. The bottom line is this, I really know what time it is and what your going to do but the store that you've been plottin on ain't quite what it seems. The store's a front, and pistoleros work in the back, and in teams, so forget that store and take a walk with me, we'll split this

We welcome to The BWO pages Robert Ramirez, who writes the following nightmare of a piece from the Alameda County Jail aka Santa Rita, which is located in Dublin, CA. We are honored to feature Robert's work. We definitely look forward to reading more down the road!

bag and celebrate that I am free.

The youngster said "chale veterano, one big bag won't hold me tight. I'll take this freakin store off and then we'll go fix right."

The youngster then got in the wind and disappeared from sight.

I'll never forget what happened on that strange cold night. I heard shots ring out from within the lil' store as I seen the youngster stagger out the front door, he stumbled to the street and fell down on his knees.

He yells, "Mr. help me please."

I ran to his side and seen death in his eyes, as he reached heaven's gates.

I woke up in the morning with teardrops in my eyes, as the man yelled, "count time..."

This is a dream, actually a nightmare of what happens and why we sometimes get locked up again. There's no excuse, but experiences do happen that scar us for life no one knows our good intentions or acts of heroism but ourselves and God let alone our true selves.

LIMMIE EARL LITTLES

We welcome to our pages Limmie Littles from Wasco State Prison in Wasco, CA. We know very little about Limmie, but we are anxious to getting to know him. We do hope he will be inspired to educate us many readers and we look forward to his reply. Thanks for taking the time to write The Beat Limmie!

Who I Am

My name is Limmie Earl Littles. I am a 28 years old African American male currently incarcerated in a California Sate Prison for the 4th and final time.

The reason why I say final time is because I don't plan on coming back to this place. I really hate being here stuck in a cell 24 to 23 hours a day, bored out my mind, with absolutely nothing to do.

The reason for me writing to you is because I love to read

and write just about anything. But I know one thing I've been reading and writing about myself since I was thirteen from to California Youth Authority to State Prison

and I think I should've been nominated for about 8 Academy Awards with my roles as starring actor in my own movies, ha,ha,ha,.

I know that this program is probably about telling stories and drama because believe me a lot of people throw it on thick in their stories and they don't keep it real, which is why I'm not gonna bore you with any drama.

As you can see I'm a straight forward get to the point type of guy because I've been living in this movie forever. So if you're interested in hearing and maybe one day seeing my autobiography then feel free to ask me any question and I'll be open and as honest and real as I can be.

I heard shots ring out from within the lil' store as I seen the youngster stagger out the front door, he stumbled to the street and fell down on his knees.

TYRONE ROBINSON

We welcome Tyrone Robinson to the pages of The Beat Within. Tyrone delivers a touching poem for us all. He writes the truth from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran CA. Until the next one, here's "Beautiful Black Baby!"

"Beautiful Black Baby"

"Beautiful Black Baby"

Wrapped in innocent love,

"Beautiful Black Baby"

Knows not of an unjust world

"Beautiful Black Baby"

Your daddy has gone to war,

"Beautiful Black Baby"

He's fighting and here we are.

"Beautiful Black Baby"

Daddy loves us so,

"Beautiful Black Baby"

He had no choice... but to go.

"Beautiful Black Baby"

There's news- pigs killed your dad,
 Freedom and peace we never had...

"Beautiful Black Baby"

Dreams

A dream is virtual reality in the unconscious stage
Exploring realities that are impossible for any human to explain

An array of dreams stimulates the mind, body and soul
Having tremendous effect on life weather you be young or old

Though time to time sweet dreams are accompanied by nightmares

Producing sleepless nights becoming the signature of despair

A dream is a beautiful thing

After all dreams are the original escape from reality
Floating on clouds and as surreal as it seems

Don't wake me just let me dream

We welcome back our new friend Curtis Cook Jr. This poet has plenty of poetry and wisdom to share this week and we are honored he can use us to express himself so loud and clear. The talented Curtis Cook Jr. writes us from a correctional facility in Selma, Alabama.

Life's' Mysteries Revealed

The end is coming

No one knows the time or date

What will be your eternal fate?

The world's carnal without care

Many stiff necks, life's unfair

When my problem becomes my only solution

What happened when a man's good deeds go unnoticed?

Am I to suffer evil to encounter good?

I'll challenge my life with poetic words daily

A little metaphor, a little free verse maybe

With lyric and meter poetry I paint this picture

Stop, take a minute to look in the mirror

Are you satisfied by what you see?

What would you change if you could?

How would friends and family view your transformation?

Will this change bring dissatisfaction to those who care?

Or will it release your inner beauty, causing many to stare

You must start with the inside out to obtain beauty
For within you will find all the elements beauty is made up of

It's not all about high definitions, and perfect cheek bones

It's about the love that flows through all of us, that keeps us strong

You wanted words on paper, words on paper can heal
Well this is it, Welcome to "Life's' Mysteries Revealed."

Crucifixion Of A Poem

Crucifixion of a poem.

Sadden me to the point

That it inspired me to write more.

Sharing my gift that some even adore
To explore, and exploring the great vision,

The ability to receive life's' perfect forecast

To use my head for more than a hat rack

Casting great detail

Better known as meditation

My poetry shows metaphor, and deep dedication

My work is colossal, and comes in many forms

There will be no crucifixion of a poem.

Learn Something

A storm is raging in everyone's life
Some of us are experiencing heartache

Others just the sting of life

Problems effects us all on every level

The rich feel that they are in charge

Only to find themselves a slave to money

The poor are waiting on a miracle

Only to find that the miracle never comes

The wise, and prudent aim to the sky

But are soon shutdown by their wisdom

The uneducated give up early in life

Only to find they had what it takes to succeed

Life is a giant ball that we must stay on

There are constant forces, making life hard

Like all the drugs, health problems, and wars

What ever happened to rich, healthy, and ordinary lives?

Shouldn't life be more than sex, money, cars and clothes?

Does man make the clothes, or do clothes make the man?

It seems that materialistic items take over peoples' lives

Exchanging fleshly hearts for technology

Have we really grown this mad as mankind?

The eagle, the raven, or the hawk would never do such things

So why is this a problem for the most intelligent beings on earth?

Is instinct better than thoughts of reason?

Let these thoughts be in you and you in them

Learn to listen with speaking, learn something for a change.

Praise God

A wise man chooses not to play prison games

Nor does he seek for his mind spiritual chains

But the fool seeks to play the prison game

Only to become a slave to slaver and much pain

His eyes invisionalize for the sight of the dead

His greed snatch the crumbs from the unfed

His words are hateful tornadoes on a great city

His lies is a deadly cancer that kills many

Don't think for once that only God is in his nature

His victims are found either dead or in prison many years later

A prudent man chooses not to play Satan's' game

Nor does he become a worshiper of worldly things

But the carnal seek to play Satan's game

Only to be casted into unquenchable flames

His mouth is a river of sin, that deceives souls

His heart is a frozen land mass, ice cold

His ears are wings, sinful evil things

His imagination is nightmares, even evil dreams

Don't think for once, that any good He can possess

His victims are found blood oozing from their chest

A godly man chooses to be a worshiper of God

His house is in order, and He is spiritually smart

His spiritual eyes are always on God, because spiritual eyes don't blink

He thinks of God, because with his spiritual thoughts

He does think

His entire world is centered around God

For we all were created to Praise God.

Alone

For the most part in my life
 It's been mystic days
 Also there's also been cold days
 Darkness that, shatters any hope of daylight
 Strongly, I've come to love
 the touch of darkness
 She doesn't talk much
 But I came to know her presents
 Not just her physical darkness
 But the darkness of being alone
 The sun shines brightly
 But I see nothing but darkness
 Darkness that grips me
 like a giant glove
 Helpless, against her might
 God, bless the lonely heart
 That sits alone at night

Out of Time

Little is known about me I'll say I'm strange to all
 There's no telling what I'm capable of
 I can demonstrate hate
 But can I ever show love
 Lost in this two tone world,
 We call life
 I'm nearly eighty years old,
 And never have I had a wife
 My mind twisted like a braid
 I'm at war with time
 And time has the upper hand
 Once young and strong now an old man
 Should I pray to God to renew my strength
 I know my father can fix me in just one wink
 Or could it be that I'm running out of time
 Many years has scourged my mind
 Old age is not treating me right
 I guess it's time to lay down my life

RAY SANCHEZ JR.

Our good friend and colleague Ray Sanchez Jr. delivers a super commentary for us readers this week. Without going into details, give Ray a few minutes of your time. Ray Sanchez Jr. writes us from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA.

To Whom It May Concern

I met someone the other day, a young lady who came across my name at a pen-pal web site. We wrote for a few months, discussing theology mostly, and some of the social problems she faced.

Coming from a fairly well-to-do background, her issues seemed, well, trivial me. She thinks I put her priorities in perspective. We met at a visit and I suppose I didn't fit into her preconceptions of me. There sat a wafer thin, delicate looking blonde in what I suppose she thought was "urban" clothing: pink and white Air Forces and Baby Phat. And there I sat, a tattooed, goateed, corn rowed Mexican in creased up prison blues. She expected a clean cut, reborn Christian. It never occurred to her that life does not fit our preconceived notions. It is not perfect and organized. It is not black and white. I am not clean cut, nor reborn, I have not seen the light and squared up. I am an ex-gang banger, dope dealer, dope fiend, drunk, and I'm a convict serving a life sentence. But, does that mean that what I say is any less heartfelt? Are my intentions any less pure? Is my message any less positive?

She was spooked at first. The whole scene was completely alien to her and I know I frightened her at first. I begged ten minutes of her time before she left in a fluster of self doubt and fear, and told her the truth- not that I ever lied to her about anything- and described my life. I told her about my family and my upbringing. I told her about the gang violence, drugs, my crappy attitude towards women. I told her about my wifey, Chris, and our beautiful daughter, Selena Angelique. I told her about the love I shared, and felt, and all the joys of being a father. I told her about here. How I got out of a gang my whole fam' claimed. How my life changed and my outlook took on a bigger view.

It was just then that she pointed out that it was the first time we ever really spoke about me. She blushed and apologized for being self-absorbed. It was kind of funny seeing her feel so ashamed of bothering me with her worries about weight, self-image issues, and why mommy and daddy don't seem to pay attention to her.

Two hours had passed since I first asked her to sit. She stayed two more before leaving and promising to visit

again.

We are all sentient, rational beings. And being rational, we have a choice. We can choose to be more, to change. And it is the intent behind those choices that define our souls.

You can be charitable because your faith demands it and be thought a good person. But, if you behave so for the soul purpose of gaining brownie points with God, then you selfish intentions taint your good deeds. For only by being charitable for the simple sake of the act itself can you fill your heart with a virtue that speaks to other souls. To me, virtue is the celebration of life, love and the desire to grow towards goodness. It is selfless and without pride or ambition. It is above justification and is a truth that transcends race, social standing, nationality, or economic position.

Each of us can bullspit to others and ourselves. We can glorify our sexual conquests or violent deeds. We can lie to ourselves and say that the dope game, hoe game, gang life, is all we know. We can lie so good, we believe our own shhh to the fullest.

But there is a place within us where virtue sits as judge, and we can no longer hide behind lies. To admit the truth of our actions is to go before that court where good and evil are intents, and it intent is without excuse. It is a painfully naked place that forces us to remove our masks and look into the mirror.

I constantly second guess myself because I often visit that place so that I can write to you without hidden agendas or pride. I did so at that visit, too. I made no excuses. I feely admitted to my past, my crooked, greedy desires. I did not attempt to make myself look good. I just shared who I was with someone who was insecure and unsure of who she was. In the end, by exposing my true self, she saw the intent of my soul and was unafraid. And I had made a new friend.

Sincerely,

Eureka

Searching for decades
 It has been a very long time
 But finally
 I have found you
 Through spirits and desperate souls
 Spirits that have left me drunk
 Souls seeking blood transfusions
 Staring into the isolated darkness
 Of a well filled with my mother's blood
 Burned alive as a Phoenix
 I have risen through the ashes
 Now I stand on solid ground
 Searching for decades
 To find the light end of my shadow
 And the dark end of my reflection
 This being that I call me
 I have found you

A Beat hall of famer is back on top, with his super thoughtful writing, and that's Professor Blackmind. We love featuring his work, if it's weekly, or once a month we are honored. We have known Blackmind for years. We first met him when he was a juvenile in a group home in Southern California. He even formed a writing squad called Poetic Minds back in the day were in that group home. Today, unfortunately, he writes us from the county correctional facility in Sacramento, CA

Beat Readers

I know I need to put the coffee down and slow my roll, but I'm sorry, I just can't stop. The writing bug just won't die and it's become quite contagious.

I recently ran into one of my homeboys that I knew since Juvenile Hall. His name is Jason (aka Jay Jona). He was raised in Sacramento, but born in Oakland. He's heard of The Beat, but he just never got the chance to write it. I told him to write something and I would send it for him, and he did (check out Jay Jona in this issue). His handwriting was crazy small so I re-wrote the pieces for him, but everything is the same. This was not a group effort, all I did was write the "Intro". Everything else is all Jay Jona. I was kind of reminiscent of my Poetic Mindz days. I'd give anything to check out those pieces I sent by PMF (Poetic Mindz Family) members ; Mystery, Mark Miami, Dark Lion, Black Dragon, Mr. Brown mind, Malcolm Luther Tubman, and even some guy named Poetic Blackmind (who? Ha!).

My favorite was Mystery (young white kid from Oakland), we were the only Northern California boys out there at the LA boys home. Anyway, PMF is done with but I just can't stop bringing people to The Beat. When you have something good it tastes better when you share it.

I know it's crazy, but I still haven't sent you all of my NEW pieces. I got numerous to send you, on top of some pieces I wrote with a fellow inmate in here, he goes by Mr. Speedy. He is a writer, poet and a very good artist. We formed a Poetic Mindz-like collective called The Brethren (like the Grisham book). We're writing pieces that are aimed at the youngster who are in and out of Juvenile Hall. We talk about how living the gangster lifestyle will eventually lead them to where we're at now. The Brethren is kind of a "Scared Straight" program on paper. I've already finished my part of the project, I'm just waiting for Speedy to finish writing and drawing his part. Unlike Poetic Mindz, The Brethren is going to be a one time collabo, I just want to try and make an impact on the young people and hopefully Speedy will make a name for himself in The Beat, as a writer and graphic artist.

Anyway, now that I've gotten way off the subject. This letter is not about me or Speedy, this is all about Jay Jona. I hope you can give him a shot, it'll truly be a blessing. Thank you, for everything. I send this with my love and gratitude. I know you're busy. Peace.

Total Separation

Total Separation
 T-SEP UNIT aka Ad-SEG
 24 hour lockdown
 You get an hour out
 Every 48 hours
 Sometimes 72
 You in a one-man cell
 No roommate
 Nobody to chop it up
 Or play dominoes with
 The silence eats away at you
 You hear someone calling you
 But they're never there
 You're losing your marbles
 Am I going nuts?
 Only the strong will stay sane
 The weak will be devoured
 And disintegrate in the belly of the belly
 Only thing to keep you strong
 Is mail and phone calls
 But in T-SEP you only come out at midnight
 They might not pick up the phone that late
 You have nothing but time
 You write your rhymes or poetry
 You draw your art pieces
 But your mind is still ill at ease
 So you write The Beat
 Wait for a reply
 You exercise
 Watch the boring shows in TV
 7 months in this cell
 This is my life
 In total separation

This Pen

Don't think
 Just write
 That's my motto
 Penning a classic is like winning the lotto
 These healing words
 Is good for your health
 Don't compromise your artistry
 Be true to yourself
 Don't try to be Shakespeare or Robert Frost
 If you're from the hood and your soul is lost
 Keep your eyes open
 But your mouth close
 Tell your story through this prose.
 Write hard until your hand hurts
 Take your art for what it's worth
 Teach the young ones
 To stay in school
 Say no to drugs
 Because dope ain't cool
 Lead by example
 Give them a sample of the power of this pen.

Beyond These Walls: Day One

12/30/07- When they built this jail, the built the pods so close that you can hear or sometimes feel what's going on in the next unit over.

Right now, I can hear two inmates in a cell beating the crap out of each other. I don't know what started it or who's involved, but I do know how it sounds when you're fighting in these five by nine cells. The punches sound like loud slaps and the grappling sound like an ape banging on the walls. A vivid reminder of why I hate this place and the politics that comes with it.

As the fighting continues, my conscience hits me. Damn! What if somebody gets hurt bad? What if they get killed? Somebody should stop them before it gets ugly. These thoughts were running through my mind when my other conscience said "Mine your own damn business!" Being in jail, that would be the best policy. But something inside of me told me that the fact that I knew what was going on made it my business. So I weighed y options: talking to the Guards was out of the question. It never even crossed my mind, no matter how serious the situation was. I believe that inmate affairs should be handled by inmates. Going to a cop for help is a good as signing your own Death Certificate.

I had to think of away to tell them to stop fighting before they hurt each other. These cells are small and the bed-which are made hard steel- takes up most of the space. It's impossible to fight or grapple without bumping into the beds. If one of their heads hit the bed, they'll need a bunch of staples and might even suffer brain damage. I've seen it happen and it was an ugly. Blood was everywhere like a scene in a horror flick.

The ability to think fast is a gift that the Lord has blessed me with and it's never failed me.

I stood onto my stool so that my head would be leveled with the air vent, then I pounded at the wall nearest to their unit. I pounded two times, nothing happened. I pounded three more times, still nothing. Then as I was stepping off my stool. I could hear a voice through the vent. Somebody yelled "hey!"

I jumped back on the stool and started communicating with an inmate in the next unit. I explained to him the situation in a coded language that only us inmates know. He thanked me for bringing it to his attention and he took care of it. The fighting stopped shortly before the guards came in to do their weekly "shakedown" cell searches. They had no idea of what was going on, which is a good thing for us. I'm just glad nobody got hurt.

I Believe in God

I believe in God
 Although I lose me faith
 Have wicked thoughts before I pray
 Fantasies of drugs and sex
 Fancy cars and funny checks
 Bathing apes and stunna shades
 Super scraper on them blades
 Candy paint and eye candy
 Like Austin Powers, feelin' rrrrandy
 SNAP
 Out of it
 Back in this cell
 Pray everyday to keep me out of hell
 None of those material things
 No tailored suits or diamond rings
 Just me and this bible
 Uninterrupted
 I believe in God
 That can be trusted

Father, I Need You

I don't know what it's like to have a Daddy
 But I realized that I do have a father
 Twenty-Two years of struggle
 But my father has kept me alive
 Lord have mercy on my soul
 Guide me in the direction I need to
 I'm so lost and awfully confused
 I have no one to turn to but you
 I'm tired of hearing preachers preach
 I'm sick of politician's speech
 My church is full of hypocrites
 To tell the truth I'm one of them
 Even when I try to do right
 I give up easy in the fight
 I'd close my eyes and hope to die
 Don't even kiss this world goodbye
 The next morning I open my eyes
 I'm still alive it's no surprise
 I still don't know what to do with myself
 I turn to you and no one else
 I'm nothing but a miserable dope addict loser
 Lord why do you love me so much
 Why do you pick me up when I fall
 You catch my tears when I cry
 You're by my side when I'm all alone
 What do you need in return

Resolution

Sobriety
 nothing more
 Nothing less
 The drug will kill me
 I don't want to die
 I've lost everything
 My house
 My car
 My money
 My clothes
 Even lost some of my fake-butt friends
 That's a plus
 But this drug has taken so much
 My heart
 My soul
 My pride
 My dignity
 I've been stripped of everything
 I stand here naked in this lonely world
 As if I never existed
 With a cold case of amnesia
 How did I get here
 What does it take to get out
 I need a resolution
 Eight years into new millennium
 I wan sobriety
 Lord I've been through so much
 Five me this one thing
 I will die without it
 I am so sensitive
 So fragile
 So torn
 I need to heal
 I want to get strong
 I want a resolution
 Sobriety

Me Against I

Before I self-destruct
 I see the face of death
 I give my soul to Satan
 Because there's nothing lefty
 Had dreams of going to college
 To get my bachelor's degree
 Got strung out on drugs
 I couldn't see clearly
 I tried so hard to rise above
 While pulling myself back down
 How can I put my faith in God
 And turn my life around
 I'm tired of blaming Satan
 For the wicked things I've done
 I look around for someone to blame
 But I'm the only one
 No gun was pointed to my head
 When I took the first hit
 I thought I didn't need the drug
 But yet I couldn't quit
 I'm 22 without a life
 Or vision I can see
 This year I would've graduated
 With my bachelor's degree

Flash Forward

I want to live
 Me screaming as a fetus
 In my mama's womb
 She has to make a decision
 Birth or abort
 I want to live
 She makes a decision
 And almost died getting me here
 I'm alive
 Flash forward '96
 We move from Chicago to Sacramento
 To get away from gangs and drugs
 Grandma got Cancer and died
 Family crisis
 Flash forward '98
 Mama is sick in the head
 I get involved with gangs and drugs
 Expelled from several schools
 In and out of Juvenile Hall
 Placed on felony probation
 Flash forward '04
 Young teen sleeping in an abandoned car
 Strung out on various drugs
 With nothing to lose
 Nothing to live for
 No one to love
 No one to lean on
 Flash forward '08
 Fresh new start
 Brand new year
 Many goals to accomplish
 Gotta stay sober
 Gotta stay strong
 I want to live

The Blood of a Child

How can you love me When I hate you so much I can never forgive you Even if I wanted to My heart will never change Why did you beat me Did you make me For the pleasure of destroying me How could you punish me For the deeds of my father A man I've never known But yet we look so much alike You cruel woman How could you spill the blood of a child As punishment for your sins Why did you bring me into this world Then throw me into the fire When you tell me you hate me When you rip into my flesh The blood pouring from my skull You don't want blood on the carpet You force me out the house Then pull me back in Just to hurt me once again You say you know how it	feels It makes me hate you even more How could you make a battered child If you were one yourself I used to wish that I could get punished Like the other kids But your sadistic ways and cruel intentions Made it necessary to make me bleed It must feel good to beat an eight year old child With a lead pipe I remember lying to the doctor "oh I fell off my bike" Thirteen stitches Table leg Eight stitches Steel rod Eleven stitches Don't forget the broken wrist, arm and tailbone fifteen years later You got the audacity to say Sorry No excuses or explanations But I'm not really surprised How do you explain Spilling the blood of a child
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Eighteen Dummy

Many people don't like or understand the Hyphy movement. Mostly because they haven't took the time to learn more about it.

I think it's wonderful when young black men can rap, dance, and have a good time without resorting to violence.

The media portray Hyphy as a drug-inspired, daredevil car stunt type of following. They make it seem as if sideshows are the worst thing to happen to America.

They said the same thing about Evil Knievel and his death-defying motorcycle stunts, but eventually they realized that he was entering and inspiring people. If it's okay for Knievel to jump over canyons, then it's not so bad for young folks to hop in their scraper and gas, brake, dip. What's wrong with shaking your dreads? What's wrong with doing whatever dance comes to mind with your thizz face on? Huh?

I'm not saying that everything about the hyphy is good. It's not cool to pop pills or any other drugs, and if you want to stunt in your scaper, make sure you're safe, like in an empty parking. You don't want to put yourself or anybody else in danger just because you wanted to "go dummy retarded" while driving.

Hyphy is a great way for young people in the urban community to get together and enjoy themselves. If you like Mac Dre, Keak da Sneak, E-40, then hyphy is the thing for you. Go! Go! Go!

The Ghost Writer

I first started writing poems and essays when I was a young teen. I had gotten expelled from one school and dropped out of another one. I got caught up in the streets and eventually locked up in Juvenile Hall. From there I ended up in the Boys Ranch, which is where I wrote my first rap.

I don't even remember what it was about, but I do remember how proud I was and how good it felt to express myself in a way I never knew was possible. But there is a big difference between writing a rap and actually rapping.

Battle rapping was a big thing at the boys ranch. The staff used to bet on whomever they felt had the best flow.

The best rapper at the ranch was a lanky kid from Oak Park named Perk. This kid had the sickest flows and the most cleverest lyrics I'd ever heard. Nobody could beat Perk in a battle. I went up against him and he devoured me. But he also taught me a very good lesson. He said "yo, you got the tightest lyrics I've ever heard, but your flow is so whack, people can't even understand them. You should stick to writing."

He was right, I was a much better writer than a performer. So first I started selling verses to rappers so they could use it in the battles. They would pay me with stuff they brought back from their home passes.

There would be a time when about 90% of the lyrics being spit in the Boy Ranch battles were either written or co-written by me. The other 10% would be Perk's and a few other rappers performing their own material. Eventually I gained a reputation as a "Ghost Writer" and they gave me names like "The Pen," "The Lyricist," and more commonly "The Professor."

Eventually, I got bored with writing lyrics and moved on to poetry. I can't remember the title or subject of my very first poem, but I do remember thinking to myself, "this is what I need to be doing."

When writing lyrics I used with and imagination to come up with flamboyant table and clever punch lines. But with poetry, I was able to dig deep down inside my soul and write about my life and what's happening in the world.

I still credit Perk as the one who inspired me to keep writing rhymes which eventually led me to write poetry. But sadly Perk never got the chance to live out his dreams. He was shot and killed by a gang member for reasons nobody knows.

It was at the Boys Ranch that I first seen a copy of the Beat. About a year later "Professor Blackmind" was born. To be continued...

Musicology

Prince made a song called "Musicology"
 But before that came "Purple Rain"

That dude is bad

He writes

He sings

He plays every instrument

And he got his own style

Prince is bad

But not badder then Mike

The king of pop

Michael Jackson

"Off The Wall"

"Thriller"

"Bad and Dangerous"

Nobody sells records like Mike

Not even the Eagles

He's a smooth criminal

Like 2 pac

Mr. Thug like

He blew up in the Bay Area

From "2Pacalypse" to "Me Against the World"

Pac is the greatest of all time

"All Eyes On Me"

"Makaveli" is a classic

Even "Better Dayz" is multi-platinum

He still putting albums out

But let's not forget "Pied Piper"

R. Kelly

"12 Play"

"The R album" and "TP2.com"

"Chocolate Factory"

He's the king of R&B

Marvin Gaye and The Isley Brothers

Paved the way

But R. Kelly took it to the next level

That's Musicology

I Will Not Lose

I will not lose

He aims to be the best

He won't accept defeat

He's out to rule the world

To conquer every street

And every block

In every town

In every county

In every state

And all around

I will not lose

He shoots, he scores

They hit the floor

The crowd cheers

They beg for more

He's never played this game before

But he will not lose

The opposition takes a shot

He's well aware the shot is blocked

He grabs the ball

Then takes the shot

A buzzer beater that can't be stopped

Swish

And he wins again

Eventually, I got bored with writing lyrics and moved on to poetry. I can't remember the title or subject of my very first poem, but I do remember thinking to myself, "this is what I need to be doing."

My Mind Is Playing Tricks On Me

Let me start off by saying that I've been a mentally ill patient/prisoner for over thirteen plus years. I've been hearing voices since the day my mother died. Which has been since 1989. Even though I have been placed on these medications that this prison as well as all of the prisons I've been in gave to me. It just don't stop the voices. I try other things to stop these voices from stressing me out, such as doing a lot of writing... like now for instance. It just don't work.

Did I happen to mention that I'm also seeing things that aren't there? I tell you this much, I'm all messed up.

What was that? I thought I just seen something run across the floor. I might have been mistaken, I don't think so-there it goes again. Crap, my minds playing tricks on me!

No I don't do drugs, at least not anymore. But that did not mess up my mind- or did it? Oh well, let's move on shall we.

I really think all this mind playing tricks on me started when my family stopped writing to me... so, if this is something you look forward to becoming, then by all means- come to prison. For you see- there it goes again... I would call for the COs to come and help me to find out what it is running around in my cell, but they'll only want to move me to the prison hospital for a few days. Which won't do me any good except for to have me hearing things and seeing things sitting in the corner in the dark of the night, which will have me shaking like a little girl.

Hell, I'm a man, weighting at 212 pounds. I should be scared of nothing or no one. But when your mind's playing tricks on you, there's nothing you or anybody else can do about it.

These doctors tell me that I need to find myself a happy place? Damn, Doc, I'm a black man in prison with only two things on his mind? "Becoming free of this hell hole... And being with the opposite sex if you know what I mean."

There my mind went again. The two things I really want is, to stop hearing these voices and to stop seeing things! Everything else can wait.

I'm a sick man and I need some help. I'm in a cell by myself, and one night I could have swore up and down that when I got up in the middle of the night to use the bathroom, I thought there was somebody sleeping in the empty bed right next to me? I almost screamed, and it was around 3:30am, so I just about pissed in my drawers. But then as always, my mind was playing tricks on me.

It's an honor from the bottom of our hearts to have the thoughtful and powerful Stephon Williams back in the pages of The Beat! Stephon steps up huge from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA. He pulls no punches in this awesome piece of work as he speaks of the evils of drugs, and what they can do to a person's brain. We hope you readers enjoy this disturbing body of work from Stephon as much as we have.

I know that I'm way beyond help, why? Because I hold conversations with myself... You might say that ain't nothing. Ah, but here's the catch, not only do I talk, but I also answers the questions that I ask. I do this a lot. So much that my neighbor (Yogi) calls over to me and asks me who am I talking to, or did I say something to him? I just tell him "you know how it is, just talking to myself as always."

He says, "yes I know, you've been talking to yourself for over an hour, so I had to ask if you were alright?"

I tell him that I'm cool, but really I'm not. My minds playing tricks on me! I can't seem to escape this feeling that I have that somebody's always watching me... I could/ would say that it's my mother watching over me everyday, but I don't think that she could see me behind these walls so thick? And if she did see me, can she see these other things running around in this cell that I myself can't? Can she tell me who or what they are? What is it that they want from me? Why are they doing this to me in the first place? I've done nothing that warrants this kind of mind games... even if it's my own mind playing these tricks on me.

I know that I'm not all by myself in this matter, because there are a lot of you out there who are in jail that are still coming down from some kind of crazy drugs. I know that you're either hearing voices or seeing things! Or maybe you're just one of those sick kind of drug users... you know who you are... the one's with things crawling all over you that you just can't get off, nor can you shake it off! Trust me, your mind is now playing big tricks on you for sure.

You might remember my name from one of my stories I wrote to The Beat? "Confessions of a Crack Addict." I smoked it so much, that I've not been right every since... So my saying to you who reads this, and anything else I just so might happen to write. Pay close attention to my words and away from "all" drugs, and your mind won't play tricks on you!

Until next time, stay away from those who sell/ use drugs! Damn, I've got to catch this thing that's running around in my cell! Don't worry about me, my mind is always going to play tricks on me!

Supposed To Be

There's only so much I can say when it comes to how things are supposed to be. So I can only share my experience growing up defying authority. Against grain, like a wild horse that refuses to be tamed, in a society where I do right in all the wrong things. I've convinced myself there is no possibility of change. Only now have I realized that I create my own fate, and it's never too late to find a new path to take.

Growing up in the system correcting repeated mistakes, I've encountered everything from fake jokes to snakes. Running, robbing and stealing everything short of killing. I possess no compassion for others feelings. On a rampage with no destination in sight. I'm in a battle when I don't even know who it is I fight. In this penitentiary with a ten year wait for robbing banks with a smile on my face. I can only say: living the life of an outlaw isn't all that it supposed to be!

BRANDON BURNETT

We welcome Brandon Burnett to The Beat Within. We are pleased to include his voice in this week's powerful issue. Brandon writes us from the Washington State Penitentiary in Wallawalla, WA

This Truth

Allow me to get in your mind
With these catchy lines
Designed to lead you from hard times
Regardless of what others say or do
It's up to you to think and choose
To make to proper moves
And decide whether you want to win or lose
All I can ask is that you absorb this truth

Peep Game

Here at Calipatria State Prison there are four yards. A, B, C and D yard. D yard is the sensitive needs yard where they send snitches, child molesters and rapist because the real gangsters on A, B, and C yard will try and kill them. There are only "two" law libraries shared by all four yards so B yard inmates get escorted to the A yard law library and C yard inmates get handcuffed and escorted to the D yard library. I'm on C yard so I have to use D yard (The snitch yard library).

As we passed by the many protected custody rats I noticed that the majority of them acted the same and looked the same as the gangsters on the regular yards. I continued searching the faces of theses dudes who didn't try and hide their shame and some even stared back with frowns. I finally found a familiar face in the group. A face I had never expected or wanted to see ever again. A face I hadn't seen since I was nine years old...My father!

I heard him calling my name and trying to get me to acknowledge him, but I turned my head how the snitches were suppose to turn there's out of shame.

I couldn't focus on my law work because I wondered about what had he done and was it towards a family member and how I could get in contact with him, acting compassionate and understanding only so he would be vulnerable when I attempted to kill him.

At that instant I was spiritually humbled because I remembered the four topics that I read in The Beat Within Volume 13.01 by author Brother Chan. I was also reminded of an incident in my past that could have landed me on a sensitive needs yard. Yes me! Peep game.

At age 16, I was tried as an adult and faced 25 years to life because my crime partner was shot and killed by an unexpected security guard in the second robbery that we pulled that night.

My crime partner's sister, who was also my girlfriend, was a law student. She didn't mind my age because she was barely 19 and I told her I was 18. So when she found out her heart was already involved. Since her brother, my crime partner was 25 years old, there's a law called "Cohersion". A statutory law where I was influenced by an adult. So that's what my defense was and I received less time.

Not only that but my case was published in a book, which is how the trouble came about. The shot caller of the gang that I was in read the book and felt that I was out of pocket because if I would say that about a dead man then I would do it to somebody alive. I immediately reached for my shank and charged after the shot caller. He blocked himself with his arm and part of the blade broke into his bicep. Instead of the shot caller coming after me, he and the two dudes that were with him casually walked to the yard sink to clean his arm. I was scared to death. I didn't know what to do. I have always been taught by my father to pursue the threat so that's why I charged after the shot caller, because he was the one doing all of the talking. I was in such fear that I went and dug up my other knife that I buried in the horseshoe pit and was ready to use it also against whoever. But no one tried anything.

The next day the shot caller came and apologized to me for not getting the facts straight. But what if the shot caller never would have admitted he was wrong and what kind of homies or friend would so easily determine to inflict harm on their homies or what if I wouldn't have charged after the shot caller the moment he made clear his decision about my character?

People in prison have a bad understanding and by the time the story gets to the person who had no business interpreting it you might end up on a yard like the one my father is on.

It's great to have back the powerful and knowledgeable Geri Vance. Geri steps up big this week from his cell in Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, CA. His "Peep Game" contribution speaks volumes. We recommend the read. We thank Geri for thinking of us, and we await for his next commentary.

Fear

Afraid, and not knowing it is the fear of the unknown
Invited as a stranger for it appeared to be alone
But once inside the home it allies with truce...
And combines itself within so that it then becomes two
By then it has grew and is prepared to invade
By initiating it's weapon the dread of being afraid
What's left is in dismay, lay prey and deranged
For that friendly stranger left and fear itself remained.

Ghetto Christmas

On the first day of Christmas, the ghetto gave to me...
A tumble weed Christmas tree
On the second day of Christmas, the ghetto gave to me...
A bike without no seat.
On the third day of Christmas, the ghetto gave to me...
Three bath tub rings!
Three tub rings, bike with no seat
And a tumble weed Christmas tree
On the fourth day of Christmas, the ghetto gave to me...
Tennis shoes without no strings
On the fifth day of Christmas, the ghetto gave to me...
A piano with missing keys
Piano missing keys, shoes with no strings, three tub rings,
bike with no seat and a tumble weed Christmas tree
On the sixth day of Christmas the ghetto gave to me...
A mattress without no sheets
On the seventh day of Christmas the ghetto gave to me...
A bowl full of pinto beans
On the eighth day of Christmas the ghetto gave to me...
A parakeet with broken wings!
Bird with broken wings, bowl full of beans, mattress no
sheets,
piano missing keys, shoes with no strings, three tub
rings,
Bike with no seat...and a tumble weed Christmas tree
On the ninth day of Christmas the ghetto gave tom me...
Water from the faucet to drink
On the tenth day of Christmas the ghetto gave to me...
Hand me down holey jeans!
Hand me down jeans, water from the sink, bird with
broken wings,
Bowl full of beans, mattress no sheets, piano missing keys,
Shoes with no strings, three tub rings with no seat...
And a tumble weed Christmas tree
On the eleventh day of Christmas the ghetto gave to me...
Food stamps and EBT
On the twelveth day of Christmas the ghetto gave to me...
Roaches in heat!

Roaches in heat, EBT, Hand me down jeans, water from
the sink,
Bird with broken wings, bowl full of beans, mattress no
sheets,
Piano missing keys, shoes with no strings, three tub
rings, bike with no seat...
And a tumble weed Christmas tree

Fixed

Just because it looks fixed
 That doesn't mean it is fixed
 Women try hard to make themselves up
 You can't use a compact on your heart
 Just because you smell good today
 That doesn't mean you do tomorrow
 Focus on you inner strength
 Be strong
 Be tough
 But still be kind
 Don't be afraid of yourself
 Save your fear for God
 Go hard
 Or go home
 And no one likes to lose
 Be the best at everything you do
 And keep your eyes on the prize
 So it stays consistent

We are honored that Professor Blackmind has share The Beat with this next poet, who goes by the name of Jay Jona. Jay writes us from the Sacramento County Jail RCCC in Sacramento, CA. We are sure we'll hear from him again, very soon.

Buy In

There is a huge price for you life
 The cost is way too much
 If you want to buy in
 Just examine the cost
 Pay very close attention
 There is a price
 For whatever life you want to live
 And the prices you are willing to pay
 To arrive at your destination
 Nothing in life is free
 Everything has a cost
 So be ready to pay the cost
 For the life you choose to live
 Do whatever it takes
 To live the best life you can live
 To guarantee success

Too Many People

I hate living with so many people
 People always in the way
 People in the hallway
 People in the stairs
 People on the yard
 People all around
 Who are all these people
 They act like they know you
 Sticking to your side
 Smothering you
 But it's out of your control
 The best thing to do is try to get along
 Its different people everyday
 They come and go
 At any given time
 Just respect everyone you meet
 Don't be unapproachable
 Make yourself available
 And acknowledged by all
 Even if there is too many people

*Nothing in life is free
 Everything has a cost*

Introducing... Jay Jona

This is Professor Blackmind and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all you wonderful folks at The Beat for giving me the privilege of introducing my good friend and fellow inmate Jay Jona. He is originally from the Bay Area and once I told him I was frequently writing The Beat, he jumped at the chance to be down with this life-changing movement. We are sending this from the confines of Sacramento County Jail's RCCC Branch. Thank you

Relax Me

I only kick it with people who can relax
 They don't make me nervous
 And they keep me sane
 They take a second to think
 About the decisions they make
 They keep it all together
 A fresh look
 And tip top hygiene
 They know how to kick back
 Take it easy
 And relax
 I called them the relaxers
 Relaxation keeps the mind healthy
 It's good for the environment
 Relaxers are smooth
 Laid back people
 Like Snoop Dogg
 Borderline star

Don't Miss A Thing

When you come to jail
 You miss so many things
 The love of the touch
 Hugs from those who care about you
 Kisses from the girl who loves you so much
 Locked up with a bunch of smelly dudes
 No space for you to stretch
 The food is a pile of cold garbage
 You miss that taste of food warmed up
 Your people come to visit you
 But that hour goes by too fast
 Here one minute
 Gone the next
 You can't control the time
 'Cause you don't run nothing
 The cops control everything
 You get their permission
 Just to take a dump
 The days go by slow
 And it hurts very much
 You miss so many things

The Day

The day finally arrived with many other inmates. We were cuffed together, our wrists were cuffed tightly in front and leg irons were secured to our ankles in pairs and then loaded into a transportation bus with a gunner in the rear of the bus in a cage.

In the two hour drive to the prison, I watched the passing scenery with unseeing eyes. When the bus pulled up in front of the gates, I stared at the huge walls surrounding the penitentiary. I watched men in blue uniforms trimming the grass and hedges in front of the prison. There were no guards visible around them. I would learn later that these were trustees at the ranch and knew it would be many years before I would reach that status, but I wasn't really worried about that. I was confronted with the problem of making my mind accept the fact that I would be in this place until my sentence was served. It is typical of man's nature that he can adjust to almost any environment; prison life is no different. The only problem was the absence of any females. Some men even adjust to this. I met men who had been sentenced to life and they had adapted to this abnormal condition. Many of these men went so far as to abstain from indulging in relationships with the she-males who abounded in prison while others quickly accepted this as the new way of life and fell in love.

During the receiving process we were stripped out of our county jail clothes and waited to be examined, then put back in a holding cell, of which they four, and crammed twenty of us into one of them with one size fits all jumpsuits; they were either too big or too small. After long hours of waiting, we were finally escorted to a unit in which we were all paired by race and put in two-man cells.

This section is used for quarantine. We were isolated from the rest of the population. We were kept there for up to ninety days, waiting in this unit which is five tiers. We're there to find out if we're going to be transferred to some

Brian, your description of prison life is very vivid and your advice for young people to "make that change" is sound. Hopefully, you will reach many readers through this writing. May the Greater Power protect you and keep you as you do your time. Baby Buffalo writes us from a correctional facility in Woodland, CA.

other prison or be endorsed to the mainline here in San Quentin State Prison.

In the cell I sat on the small bunk and thought about everything and about the year I would be released. Since there was no getting around it and I would have to serve the time, I made my mind up at the moment that I wouldn't take any shhh from anyone.

I knew there were only two kinds of people in prison, either you were a man or a punk or too old to have to worry about it.

Since I was young, I knew I would have to worry about it, so I made up my mind to be one of the pushers and not one of those that got pushed.

The first weeks in prison I spent receiving blood tests and shots. After that we were given lectures on prison life and constant warnings not to borrow anything from other inmates. We were let out of our cells to eat at a chow hall twice a day, for breakfast and dinner; lunch was given to us in a paper bag. Showers are only done twice a week because of the overcrowded population of inmates.

Besides all that, I have found out there are close to six hundred inmates on death row. Months have gone by and I come to find out from a guard that I have been endorsed to do this time here at San Quentin State Prison, so I got to go get my property together and wait for the escort to the mainline unit. The whole point to this being written is, think of what you have read. Is it something that you would like to experience? I would like to speak with a lot of youngsters some time in the future that are getting themselves into, or are in a pattern of, crime, violence, gangs and using drugs, and abusing alcohol. For those who are, make that change.

The Visitor

Tonight I had a visitor; he walked right through the bars. At first I thought he was a ghost or maybe a man from Mars. He took a chair from the corner and placed it by my bed, he leaned over to me and this is what he said.

Look at you lying there so lost and all alone. I expected more from you, yet you call this place your home...

So many chances and you couldn't hold on, I felt your pain sing to me like some played out country love song...

And, yeah, you're right when you told me this place gets old, I've been here for you so many times even to me this place feels like my home away from home...

And I know it hurt you when your mother died; I was there, remember, I was your mirror, so I couldn't help but notice the emptiness in your eyes...

But you didn't give up, no, you held on tight, suicide not an option even though you fought like hell with it that night...

Now you're over 30 and what have you got to show, dreaming of something, holding onto nothing, wishing you had your family back to hold?

Gone like the wind, your own memories a ghost, you weren't even out long enough, what, one year at the most...

But I'm not here to put you down, no, that isn't what you need, I'm going to help you leave this place and show you what it takes to succeed...

And as I was lying there I looked up to see and, boy, I was shocked when I learned the visitor was me.

RALPH OFFIELD

Ralph Offield writes from Western Missouri Correctional Center with vivid descriptions and entrancing prose and poetry. Thank you, Ralph, for giving us the opportunity to share your work. You definitely have within you what it takes to leave that place.

Me

I'm 32 years old but in so many ways I refuse to grow up. Maybe that's why I've made the choices I've made and come to a place I've lived in most of my life. But I'd like to tell the youth of the world who have to deal with the loss of a family member or friend at such a young age to live through them because for every tear that falls holds truth so real that the memory will have no choice but to live on. I know this because I lost my best friend, my mother, on August 7th, 2004. Mom's are awesome, so if you're the lucky ones who still have that gift in your lives, tell them what they mean to you.

Mom's are awesome, so if you're the lucky ones who still have that gift in your lives, tell them what they mean to you.

The Dash

I read of a man who stood to speak
At the funeral of his friend.
He referred to the dates on her tombstone
From the beginning- to the end.
He noted that first came the date of her birth
And spoke of the second with tears,
But he said that what mattered most of all
Was the dash between those years.
For that dash represents all the time
That she spent alive on earth,
And now only those who loved her
Know what that little line is worth.
For it matters not, how much we own;
The cars, the house, the cash.
What matters is how we live and love
And how we spend our dash.
So think about this long and hard,
Are there things you'd like to change?
For you never know how much time is left.
(You could be at "dash mid-range"!)

If we could just slow down enough to consider
What's true and what's real,
And always try to understand
The way other people feel.
And...be less quick to anger,
And show appreciation more
And love all the people in our lives
Like we've never loved before.
If we treat each other with respect,
And more often wear a smile,
Remembering that his special dash
Might only last a little while.
So, when your eulogy is being read
With your life's actions to rehash...
Would you be pleased with the things they have to say
About how you've spent your dash?

Looks who's back, our buddy from the Midwest, Herbert Schweigert, who writes us from the Crossroads Correctional Center in Cameron, Missouri. This spiritual man brings his love and thoughts to us, and we are as always honored to share his words, his wonderful loving God.

Tempted

Sometimes when you're fighting battles,
And are tempted to give O'er
Here's a little thought to help you
To be brave and fight some more.
It will make a world of difference
When the enemy assails,
If you'll claim divine assistance,
Knowing Jesus never fails.
Jesus never lost one battle,
Thought temptations came His way,
Just a cruel and as subtle
As we're finding them today.
Now we have the glad assurance
That a conquering power prevails
In and through the constant presence
Of a love that never fails.
When you find a weaker brother,
Losing out where he could win,
Tell him that the blood will cover
All his failures...all his sin
From the wondrous cross on Calvary
Flows the stream that still avails,
Cleansing hearts and bringing victory
Through that love which never fails.

A Mother's Love

Long long ago: so I have been told,
Two angels once met on streets paved with gold.
"By the starts in your crown," said one to another,
I see that on earth you were a mother."
"And by the blue-tinted halo you wear,
You have seen much sorrow and deep despair."
"Ah, yes," she replied, "I once had a son
A sweet little lad, full of laughter and fun."
"But tell of your child." "Oh, I knew I was blessed
From the moment I first held him close to my breast.
And my heart almost burst with the joy of that day."
"Ah, yes," said the other, "I felt the same way."
The former continued, "The first steps he took,
So eager and breathless, the sweet startled look.
Which came over his face, he trusted me so,"
"Ah, yes," sighed the other, "How well do I know!"
"But soon he had grown to a tall handsome boy,
So stalwart and kind- and it gave me such joy.
To have him just walk down the street by my side,"
"Ah, yes," said the other, "I felt the same pride."
"How often I shielded, and spared him from pain."
And when he for others, was so cruelly slain."
"When they crucified him- and they spit in his face,
How gladly I would have, hung there in his place!"
A moment of silence- "Oh, then you are she,
The Mother of Christ," and she fell to one knee;
But the Blessed One raised her cup, drawing her near,
And kissed from the cheek of the woman, a tear.
"Tell me the name of the son you loved so,
That I may share with you your grief and your woe"
She lifted her eyes, looking straight at the other,
"He was Judas Iscariot. I am his mother."

And His Name Shall Be Called Wonderful, Isaiah 9:6

He's the One who paints the glory in the sunset,
He's the One who glides the eastern sky at dawn,
He's the One who puts the silver in the moonlight,
He's the One who giveth grace into the fawn.
He's the One who puts perfume in the lily,
He's the One who gives the rose its petals fair,
He's the One who giveth life to all the living,
He's the One who scattereth beauty everywhere.
He's the One who gives the stars their wondrous
splendor,
He's the One who gives the bird its joyous song,
He's the One who spreads the dew upon the garden,
He's the One who rolls the mighty sea along.
He's the One who giveth to the field its flowers,
He's the One in all the universe most fair,
He's the One who sends the sunshine and the showers,
He's the One who with whom none other can compare.
He's the One who made the valleys and the mountains,
He's the One who gives the fields of golden grain,
He's the One who made the crystal flowing fountains,
He's the lamb of God who for my sins was slain.
He's the One who blends the colors in the rainbow,
He's the One who draws the snowflake's fair design,
He's the One who cares for me thru' sun and shadow,
And the wonder of it all is- He is mine!

Lost But Found

Since I have been incarcerated in prison, I have lost just about everything. My parents passed away. My girlfriend dumped me and all my so called friends have moved on. I couldn't seem to stop myself from dwelling on all the things that I had lost...That is until I found God. Now I realize I myself was what I lost. Now I have a totally different outlook on things and I know now that God will never put more on me than I could handle.

Anyone who hasn't found God, please do so. He was truly my only answer and I know He will be yours too.

*Now I realize I myself
was what I lost.*

Let Jesus Talk For You

We must give up the urge to worry about our future,
let God control the outcome.
We must put our faith in Him 100% and when He thinks
we are ready to leave prison
He will release us.
His will be done.... Not ours.
Don't worry we have the best advocate lawyer in our
Christ Jesus.

One Sweet Solemn Thought

One sweet solemn thought
Comes to me o'er and o'er
I'm nearer home to-day;
Then I have been before.
Nearer my father's house
Where many mansions be,
Nearer the great white throne
Nearer the Crystal Sea.
Nearer the bound of life
Where burdens are laid down,
Nearer leaving the cross,
Nearer gaining the crown.

You Gave Me

You gave me my hands
to reach out and mend
To show them you love
and your perfect plan.
You gave me my ears,
I can hear your voice so clear
I can hear the cries of the people
but I can't wipe away the tears.

In the Presence of the Lord

I have finally found a way to live,
Just like I never did before.
And I know I don't have much to give,
But I can make it even more.
Everybody knows the secret,
Everybody knows the score,
I have finally found a way to live,
In the presence of the Lord.
Yes, in the presence of The Lord!

*You are under the influence of the ghet-
to when you sometimes wish that you
were dead or had never been born...*

TERRY MOSES

Terry Moses in a correctional facility in Lone, CA has been busy with his book project, but has taken time to contribute the following. Great to have you back on board, Terry...you've got some pretty powerful writing!

The Fallacy of Fact

The gang myth, yea, it was just like I pictured it, with bullets constantly flying past your head only to look up and find an innocent baby lying dead, now everybody is screaming for revenge so we end up doing the same stupid shhh our rivals just did because in this life it's an eye for an eye, but not one of us could vividly tell you the reason why because we were trapped in a mythological lie, taught to believe that we were each other's enemy only to find out later that you are really biologically kin to me and when I finally did wake up from my stupidity it was like my vocabulary didn't even belong to me; I was speaking words like "berious" instead of "serious" and when I went to apply for a job the people thought I was confused and delirious, so I left the place feeling kind of dumb, realizing for the first time that being raised by the gang was not at all fun and the myth that ultimately became reality, well, it filled my life with nothing but heartaches and tragedies.

Tales of Reality

You are under the influence of the ghetto when you have a hangover from hunger and your stomach is growling like thunder and when you wanted to go to school, but you had no shoes, so you're missing your education because poverty and hunger has taken reservations.

You are under the influence of the ghetto when you become intoxicated on violence and the rage you feel is no longer silent.

You are under the influence of the ghetto when you sometimes wish that you were dead or had never been born, but your little sister is hungry and holding onto your arm and when she looks into your eyes the love you see cannot be denied, so it is for her you know you must survive.

As we passed by the many protected custody rats I noticed that the majority of them acted the same and looked the same as the gangsters on the regular yards. I continued searching the faces of theses dudes who didn't try and hide their shame and some even stared back with frowns. I finally found a familiar face in the group. A face I had never expected or wanted to see ever again. A face I hadn't seen since I was nine years old...My father!

read the rest of Geri Vance's BWO piece on page 59

